(Sub)Urban Confluence

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Abstract

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(sub)urban confluence:
From stripmall to community hub.

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This thesis hypothesizes that by transforming large-scale underperforming commercial sites, scattered throughout suburbia into community hubs, they would be well positioned to serve as conveyors of essential social and economic stimulus for the suburbanites of the 21st century. Suburban populations are changing but their fragmented and sprawling landscape is not. Newcomers often find themselves in a vast isolated landscape, unable to access vital social services and form tight-knit communities that urban centers afford them to do. The lack of public, social, and political infrastructure is commonplace in much of suburbia and Seattle's suburb of Shoreline is no exception. Among its sprawling tracts of single-family homes lies Aurora Square, a 60-acre suburban strip mall located along Aurora Avenue. A largely unchanged relic of 1960's, this site has been identified by the City of Shoreline being in a desperate need of intervention; thereby designating it as a 'Community Renewal Area.' In hopes of stimulating business and community activities, the city's current proposal does but little to transform the site's archaic automobile dominated configuration and most importantly, lacks the impetus of addressing the needs of the changing face of suburbia. I believe that by looking at the local and regional contexts of Aurora Square, and other sites similar to it, they can be appropriately programmed to match the needs of a future population. Transforming from moated strip malls, to a network of dense, interconnected, community hubs with rich commercial, cultural, social, and democratic activity. This thesis builds upon existing and pertinent urban design theories, deploying them to form a variety of public spaces in a landscape that incorporates hydrology, the human experience, walkability, activity levels, infrastructure, connectivity, community, and density. Where the buildings strive to catalyze public space through their consideration for affordability, variety (design, type, and ownership), density, flexibility, configuration and connection to the street. By reshaping and reprogramming the site, this thesis ultimately seeks to create a community hub where all walks of life can live, gather and thrive.

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Introduction

Preface : This chapter introduces the driving factor behind this thesis. The issues that are facing suburbia are vastly different from what they once were. The world is rapidly changing and this change is being realized in the suburban fabric as newcomers enter a built environment that is far different than the dense neighborhoods of North American cities such as those of Boston, New York, and Toronto. As newcomers turn to affordability of suburbs, they are entering a geography wrought by vastly different economic climate. These newcomers, from cities and countrysides alike, often do not have the means to afford all of the necessities that suburbanites so readily rely upon, and thus enter an environment disadvantaged and isolated; one which is far different from the dense and lively neighborhoods of the city. By looking at what allowed for immigrants to succeed as they fled crippling poverty, we can infer policy and design strategies to facilitate escape from poverty for all suburban residents.

Suburbs Are Changing

The once-pervasive upper-middle class sitcom suburbs of the 1950s are no longer. Change is being driven by the triumphing post-industrial cities, attracting the once reclusive suburbanites with the promise of wealth, social capital, and opportunity. This reversal has been driven by a shift in cultural attitudes, the generation once trapped in suburban sprawl is drawn toward the city in search of culture, excitement, entertainment, romance, companionship, career, and freedom.[1] However, prior to this revival cities had their luster tarnished and through fragmentation, division, poverty, and were victims of draconian policies and regulations.[2]

Racial politics, either through malfeasance or myopic beneficence, such as the forces that entrenched the Chinese population into what is now referred to as the International District in Seattle or housing covenants that relegated black citizens to Seattle's Central District are examples how policy can have lasting impacts for generations.

For example, in 2010 news started to circulate around Seattle that it's 98188 zip code was home to America's most diverse population, where up to 59 different languages were spoken. While this diversity was initially seen as something positive, after further study it was found that this diversity was not organic in nature but caused by twentieth-century segregation, the impacts of which still linger to this day. Seattle's pride was short-lived when it turned out that this diversity did not originate from the typical immigrant clustered-settling patterns, popularly associated with New York and Toronto, but from having been forcibly assigned into one location through political redlining and exclusionary zoning.[3] Despite having a breadth of diversity on paper, these communities were formed from racial groups being tightly clustered into shared housing; a phenomenon which is referred to by researchers Ryan Gabriel and Tim Thomas as 'micro-level segregation.'[4]

Additionally, the intergenerational poverty that resulted from these practices should be a dire warning as free-market forces segregate and concentrate poverty into large tracts of suburbia as the less affluent and the vulnerable immigrant class are priced out of our dense cities and pushed into the emptiness of suburbia. The vacancies and the property prices that are starting to reflect the suburban middle-class emigration are attracting those who are no longer able to afford the skyrocketing housing prices of the city.

If redlining practices and the concentration of poverty into one area are indicative of the long lasting, intergenerational, impact they have created, we can expect a perhaps even worse situation to develop in suburbia as poverty is starting to become

concentrated in a place that lacks the social and physical infrastructure that cities provide.

Inversion of the City

A change is occurring in the demographics of America's cities and suburbs; the archetypal urban areas of the twentieth century are being reconfigured. The stereotypical fractured-core city, one inhabited by poor non-white and immigrant classes, surrounded by wealthy suburbs, is undergoing a reversal.[5] This trend, despite having some nuanced and particular scenarios (e.g. Detroit), is occurring within central cities and is documented in Alan Ehrenhalt's (2012)book, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City*. Ehrenhalt considers this larger trend occurring in America's cities is equivalent to a prototype of late-nineteenth-century Vienna;[6] a model where the affluent reside in a vibrant city core while the lower classes are relegated to the city's peripheral suburbs. While this claim overgeneralizes, it captures the demographic shifts that have resulted from the reduction in crime, disease, and the relocation of unsightly industry that once drove the middle and upper classes out of the city. Additionally, households are becoming smaller and the compact nature of city living is no longer such a deterrent and high salaried positions attract an educated workforce along with companies seeking a large highly productive pool of talent.[7]

While the core-city is becoming increasingly attractive, its immediate suburbs are becoming even more so.[8] The staggering population increase in suburban rings can be seen in figure 0.1. This chart, however, only tells a partial story. To fully understanding what is driving this underlying trend, poverty rates must also be examined (see figure 0.2). The slow growth in poverty that is evident in these adjacent suburbs is being described by the Brookings Institute as the 'Suburbanization of Poverty.'[11] Researchers at the Brookings Institute found that these suburban communities have experienced the "fastest pace of growth in the number of poor residents living in concentrated poverty,"[12] between 2008 and 2012 compared to those in cities. More recently gathered data paints a vivid picture of this seemingly exponential trend. The number of Americans living under the poverty line in suburbs (16.5 million) have exceeded their city counterparts (13.5 million). More astounding since the year 2000 suburban poverty has increased by 139% versus urban poverty of 50%.[13] Unlike the urban poor, the suburban poor face unique disadvantages such as the reduced access to high salaried jobs, worsened by the inferior public transportation[i] in suburban areas, and lack of accessibility to

[i] In 2012, 76.9% of low-income suburbs with transit access. However, only 30% of low-income suburbs had access to public transit that provided access to metro jobs within 90 minutes.[14]

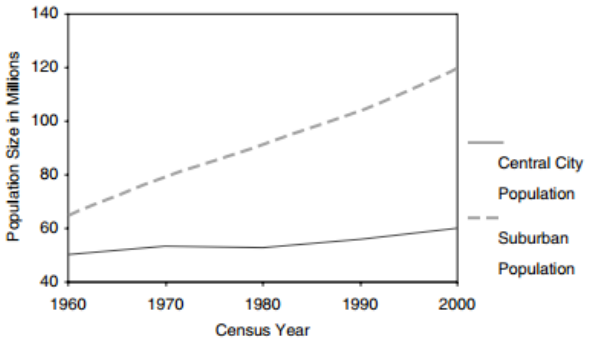

Figure 0.1 Persons (in millions) in U.S. central cities and suburban rings.
Source: A. Guest and S. Brown (2005).[9]

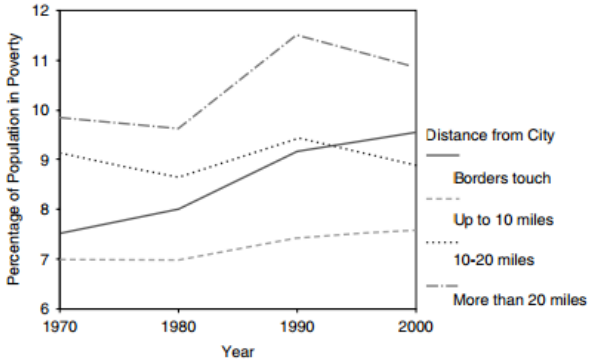

Figure 0.2 Suburban poverty levels by the distance from the central city.
Source: A. Guest and S. Brown (2005).[10]

important social services.[15] When one looks at the reliance of the private car, the numbers revealed are astounding: 91% of surbanities commute everyday by car. This means the average suburban commuter pays between $6,967 and $9,122, per year, for the cost of car ownership.[16] Not only does this significantly weigh on salary, but reduces access and frequency to services such as, healthcare, education, childcare, social programs, high salaried work, and cultural facilities. Therefore, one way to combat the creation of entrenched poverty is to provide social services locally, many of which are available to the low-income residents in cities. This includes creating good job opportunities, schools, affordable housing, and crime prevention.[17]

While there are some poor suburban residents living in the midst of affluent middle-class neighborhoods, ones with sufficient infrastructure, there is a current trend that poor are becoming spatially concentrated in particular neighborhoods. Since the year 2000 'high-poverty tract' neighborhoods (where 20% or more of the population lives below the poverty line) have grown by 64%.[18] It is in these particular communities where there is not only a dearth of public infrastructure (e.i. transit, sidewalks, street lighting, etc.) but a lack of social resources needed to provide a safety-net for a growing population. In this beneficial environment, poorer residents could have access to a pathway out of poverty, one that allows families to escape the otherwise crippling conditions of intergenerational poverty.

Not only are the suburbs becoming home to lower income populations, they are experiencing an influx of immigrants. According to the Brookings Institute, America's immigrant population is becoming increasingly dispersed as they are more likely to choose to live in the suburbs rather than urban centers. In 2000, roughly more than 50% of immigrants lived in suburbs adjacent to America's largest metros.

In less than 15 years this number has increased to 61%.[19] Jill Wilson, a senior research analyst at Brookings, was quoted in The Atlantic stating, "Immigrants are going for the same thing that everybody else is—an affordable place to live, good schools, safety, closeness to jobs, as jobs have also moved out to the suburbs."[20] The influx of immigrants in has been especially beneficial in cities where an aging population is unable to create a thriving economy. However, immigrants can be highly vulnerable to isolation and lack of social infrastructure, therefore requiring the same or even more social services, similar to the ones needed by their increasingly diversifying and lower-income neighbors.

Case Study: Lessons from Toronto

Toronto's twentieth-century inner core serves as an exemplary precedent for understanding the necessary components required to not only facilitate successful immigration but lift a community out of poverty. Toronto's inner core, especially after World War II, has served as a destination for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from across the globe fleeing rural poverty. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, southern China, the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean were all initially able to access the resources of the inner city, which was instrumental in the inner city being a "profoundly successful machine for the integration and inclusion."[21]

As the immigrants began to settle they clustered around places that not only shared their ethnicity and language, forming ethnic neighborhoods.[ii] They also had access to large supply of the then - unfashionable Victorian and Edwardian housing stock located within the neglected downtown. This housing stock had relatively low property prices compared to the rest of greater Toronto and thus provided an affordable entrance into the housing market. At first, newcomers could only afford to rent these dilapidated houses but were quick to purchase them because property and homeownership granted them physical and symbolic entry into the middle class.

Through rights of ownership and ingenuity, immigrants soon customized their residencies as they saw fit (see figure 0.3), thanks to Toronto's loose planning, zoning and licensing enforcement.[22] Residential districts soon became home to shops, restaurants, rental ventures, and other forms of businesses often installed on the ground floor of houses. It is important to note that these neighborhoods were also not isolated. Adjacent to them were large middle-class neighborhoods able to provide convenient access to employment and steady stream of customers. The exchange of capital was ultimately responsible for the high level of success in small business ventures

[ii] Doug Saunders refers to these ethnic neighborhoods as acting as, 'arrival cities.'[23]

Figure 0.3. West Queen West, Toronto. Immigant stores.

started by immigrants.

As land and home values in the inner-city increased, coupled with the stability of blue-collar income and successful businesses ventures, children of even first generation immigrants were able to afford post-secondary education and a move into nearby suburbs. This allowed the various immigrant groups, such as the Poles, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Indians, Portuguese, Pakistanis, Vietnamese and Trinidadians, to be able to enter the "middle class within one generation, if not sooner."[24] Ironically, the success of these earlier immigrants has rendered these once 'arrival city' neighborhoods largely inaccessible to the immigrants of the twenty-first century. According to Saunders, "no longer are the high-density red-brick districts of downtown Toronto an affordable bargain for new immigrants... The arrival cities of our century are now overwhelmingly located in the suburbs."[25]

The entrenching poverty that suburbanization can cause is explicitly apparent in this highly susceptible group of newcomers. The arrival period of immigrants has shifted dramatically. The high density and low housing prices allowed for families to move into the middle-class typically within one generation – given the accrual of social capital, equity, language skills, education and employment/ business success. This path, however, is far harder to follow in their new suburban setting. Stable blue collar and industrial jobs are few and far between and thus immigrants have had turn to the service industry for employment; one which is far less secure and lacks the long-

term employment benefits, such as pensions and wages, which can support mortgage payments. Additionally, Saunders writes "entrepreneurial opportunities that gave a great many immigrants families their platform for success are less easy to find in the suburbanized geography that awaits today's immigrants."[26] Immigrants who had the opportunity to start their own business had access to fringe benefits such as: being able to employ multiple family members, being able to watch over children while working, proximity to housing, and being able funneling capital into a family business. The suburban fabric is removing the ability to become a successful entrepreneur thereby preventing newcomers from attaining social and economic mobility that was once readily available. The lack of financial opportunities can even lead to the 'worst-case scenario' where some families or individuals could become trapped in intergenerational poverty.

It should be noted that the very factors and attributes that make an urban neighborhood so well suited as 'the bottom rung of the ladder' are the very ones that give a neighborhood its very low housing costs in the first place. As such, the inner-suburban immigration experience will be similar in a sense that its poor qualities physical qualities will attract a population that cannot afford the housing costs that might otherwise be present in a more expensive neighborhood. The affordable portions of suburbs will be indicative of areas with low population densities, poor public transportation options, limited public and social resources and policies that will maintain the status quo of the existing fabric.

Design, on a large scale, can be used to help curate and catalyze equitable social mobility and practiced democracy. Places that are designed with a democratic mindset, such as Henri Lefebvre's concept of *the right to the city*,which democratize 'access to place' and the 'power to produce places' are able to afford the sense of self-determination and placemaking.[27] Additionally, policy can be used to identify missing rungs and remove barriers that might otherwise prohibit social mobility. Even a simple and low-cost policy change, one that removes a single barrier of integration, will cost considerably less than the future price of intervening a community that is entrenched in poverty and has largely failed in its social integration.

What Lies Ahead

While policy and social intervention might serve as more ubiquitous routes for intervention, the built environment can also play a crucial role. The powerful impact our physical environment can have on us can be seen in the attempts of urban renewal and in their creation of the inner-city 'projects.' These buildings and landscapes have had staggering implications in both the

physical safety and psychological well-being of their residents. Design and policy must work in conjunction if we are to address the health, safety and success, of our most vulnerable, and increasingly marginalized, citizens. Additionally, suburbs have a far different density and infrastructure configuration than cities, requiring a far more rigorous and thorough intervention. Simply providing for additional density in single family zones does not alleviate the issue of affordability nor suburbia's isolationism and only manages to exacerbate an already overburdened highway system and environment through the inevitable addition of private vehicles.

First, and foremost, we must explore and understand the creation of our suburbs. What drove people to escape the city? What roles did transportation technology, marketing, and the federal government play in their creation? How did societal forces, such as nostalgia and consumerism drive demand?

Second, we must understand the popular urban planning theories that have responded to the plight of suburbia. How did they succeed? How did they fall short? Are there any new trends that hold promise?

Thirdly, we look to the future of suburbia and the residents that will soon call it home. Who are these new comers and how can we take urban amenities which helped bring countless families out of poverty and into the middle class? Is there a basic framework to follow that cannot only solve systemic issues, but also be justified by weighing upfront cost with costs that will otherwise accumulate by doing nothing? Where can we find places in suburbia which can accommodate large scale intervention? How does aiding those in need help society achieve its goal of sustainability as a whole?

Lastly, how would such a proposal look and function? By examining this larger picture we can being to understand what the requirements are to meet the demands of our rapidly changing suburbs.

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Image Credits

Figure 0.1 Guest, Avery M., and Susan K. Brown. "Population Distribution and Suburbanization." *Handbook of Population*. Edited by Dudley L. Poston and Michael Micklin. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2005. Page 66.

Figure 0.2 Guest, Avery M., and Susan K. Brown. "Population Distribution and Suburbanization." *Handbook of Population*. Edited by Dudley L. Poston and Michael Micklin. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2005. Page 66.

Figure 0.3 AirBNB. "West Queen West, Toronto." Digital image. The 15 Coolest Neighborhoods in the World (2016). *http://www.howitravel.co/the-15-coolest-neighborhoods-in-the-world-in-2016/*.

CHAPTER 1

Preface : Before continuing on to Chapter 1 and the brief historical overview of suburban development in the United States, I would like to state that I will be relying largely on Paul Knox's (2008), *Metroburbia, USA*. As a distinguished professor of Architecture and Urban Studies, and senior fellow at Virginia Tech, Knox's capability of expounding upon urban policy, both framed in a recent and historical setting, provides for a solid foundation describing the externalities which have culminated in our current day suburban geography. Knox's book provides a succinct, and largely unbiased, interpretation of the historical rise of suburbia ranging from the 1800s until the early 1990s. Chapter 1, for this reason, will rely heavily on Knox's writings to establish a proper introduction for the reader, providing an important historical context which will be addressed later on in this thesis.

The Nascent Suburbs

Suburbia has long been synonymous with the American Dream; one where ownership of a house, yard, 2.3 kids and white picket fence represented the coveted entrance to the middle class. The importance and perhaps, more importantly, the causation of this ubiquitous dream, cannot be understated, even in today's society where the migration to urban centers is becoming an ever more appealing choice. What we know today as the phenomenon of suburban sprawl traces its origins to England and the Industrial Revolution. By the end of the eighteenth-century, massive urbanization and industrialization led to overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, overburdening the existing housing stock and infrastructure (see figure 1.1). Unable to keep up with demand, cities became synonymous with deterioration, congestion, contagion, pollution and crime.[1] This perception of the city was especially widespread among the affluent and well-to-do families who were anxious to sell their townhomes in prospect for the refuge that the countryside provided.

This flight was proliferated with the prospect of societal advancement through land ownership. Soon the countryside was populated by well-to-do classes such as merchants, lawyers, bankers and tradesmen.[2] However, the countryside was far homogenous as the servants of the wealthy soon followed suit. They too established residences in the countryside so they could be in walking distance to their employers.

Figure 1.1 Slums of 18th century London.

At first, this influx of families and their servants was limited to those who could afford the cost of commuting to the city, but as transportation technologies quickly advanced and in turn became cheaper, the option to join the evacuation to the countryside became increasingly affordable to less wealthy families. Soon transportation came in a variety of forms, such as the private modes which consisted of horse and carriage, or through public modes which consisted of trams, omnibuses, electric streetcars and commuter rail. The availability of public transportation thereby directly facilitated and limited the expansion of the first suburbs.[3]

The First Suburban Theories

While this was occurring in more industrialized

portions of Europe, the writings and philosophy which concerned themselves with anti-urban ideals soon became widespread.

The authors behind the American Renaissance, dating back to the 1830s, were heavily influenced by these ideals and attitudes emerging from their European contemporaries. The Transcendentalists, most notably, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were explicitly anti-urban. Their writings favored a bucolic and pastoral landscape; settings which were free from the disease and crime that otherwise plagued the 'infernal' city. For it was the industrial city that inspired Thoreau's famous quote: "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."[4] For Thoreau, embedding oneself in nature, as he did at Walden Pond, offers salvation through means of simple living and self-sufficiency. One finds meaning, self-worth, and pleasure directly through interacting with nature and therefore advocated, "accessibility to Nature as a spiritual wellspring for city dwellers."[5] It is only logical that the influence of European Romanticism of homestead settlements, a housing typology that drew from both country and city, would appeal to the Transcendentalists.

This connection to nature resonated with mid-nineteenth century Americans to such a degree that "...Nature and the Great Outdoors was distinctly 'American.'"[6] This 'frontier' narrative was further pushed through

Figure 1.2 Flatford Mill 'Scene on a Navigable River' 1816-1817. John Constable.

the writings of various authors and historians that the development and improvement of virgin land would allow for upward mobility.[7] It was soon a widespread ideology that, "access to undefiled, bountiful and sublime Nature is what accounts for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans."[8] This ideal of Nature was further promoted through the use of pastoral and picturesque settings (see figure 1.2) in which Man and Nature could achieve balance. This vision of Nature became widespread and greatly influenced that vision of what should be the suburban setting: one that has the, "... refining influences of cultural, political and social institutions,"[9] as well as a place for the morality which nature brings.[i]

This attitude was reflected in the works

[i] As a side note, this notion of 'cultural refinement' subsequently led to a progressive movement that successfully advocated for the founding of public libraries, galleries, museums, and parks for the betterment of "ordinary people."[10]

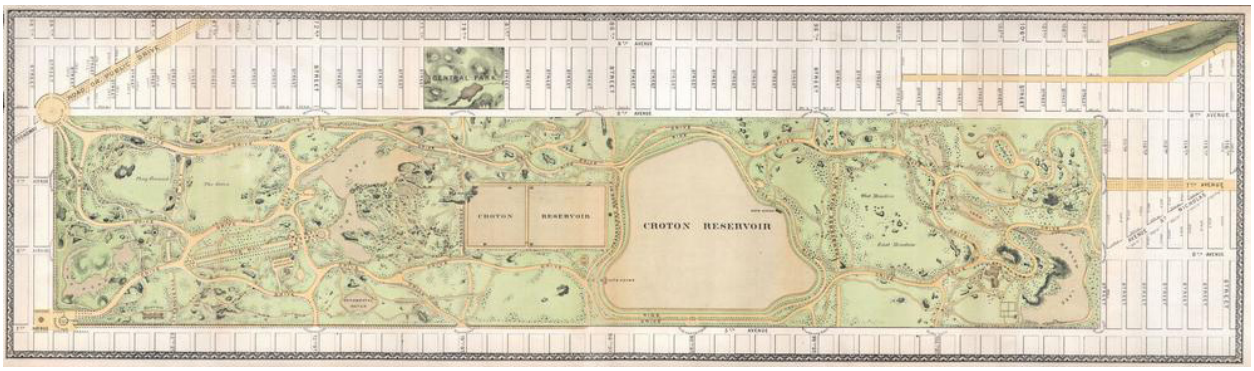

Figure 1.3 Olmsted's plan for Central Park, New York.

of many architects and landscape architects, notably Frederick Law Olmsted, who's role was seminal in shaping the future of American town planning. Guided by the idyllic, holistic and morality set by this new American narrative, Olmsted saw his designs "serving the psychological and social needs of city residents to have access to a naturalistic landscape, a secluded escape from the first and noise of the city, a place for leisure and recreation, and an environment that would foster restraint and decorum."[11] His design for New York's Central Park (see figure 1.3) is an embodiment of this holistic vision; a picturesque landscape embedded with specific programs of sport, recreation, culture, and circulation routes that did not interrupt the landscape. This city park became so acclaimed that many other major cities (and campuses) hired Olmsted so that they too could provide a natural respite from the city. Despite this effort to form what the 'clear image' of Nature within an urban setting should look like, American suburbs formed their own image, one that was in stark contrast to 'Nature' which was appropriated by cities.

Garden Cities

Not only was Olmsted involved with various park projects, he, among others, developed a unique concept of what a 'garden suburb' should be. Despite *pastoral* and *agrarian* being widely accepted concepts, how these motifs translated into the built environment varied dramatically. The resulting utopian suburban landscapes ranged from, "...Arcadian ecology, the romantic idea of wilderness; Romantic transcendentalism; a Jeffersonian agrarian vision of the virtuous yeoman farmer; aristocratic stewardship of the land; rural republicanism; the English pastoral ideal including the country cottage, wild garden, and country house; Puritan New England democratic values; and historic preservationism."[12]

Olmsted and Calvert Vaux envisioned a suburban development that would fit in with the ideals of the American Renaissance, one that offered urban life amenities, but without "...the congestion, tumult, noise, crime, and

Figure 1.4 General Plan of Riverside Olmsted, Vaux & Co. Landscape Architects, 1869.

vice," and at the same time offered the benefits of country-living but without the isolation and inconvenience. Their first project, Riverside, was located nine miles from Chicago via railroad (see figure 1.4). Built in 1869, this Garden City was designed to be lushly landscaped, offer large private detached housing, while providing open spaces for areas for community involvement. Due to its location on an existing rail network, its convenience factor for commuters quickly spurred other garden cities to emerge upon Chicago's local railway network. These upper-middle class rail commuter enclaves were emulated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century near other large cities that could provide railroad infrastructure.

Meanwhile, pressure on European cities intensified as well, where "...a craving for nature, elbowroom, and wholesomeness obsessed most city dwellers, and a marriage of town and county became a logical objective."[13] Therefore the possibility of living in a Garden City became incredibly attractive. In England, Ebenezer Howard formulated a concept that would allow all classes to have access to these utopias, where jobs and amenities were present alongside housing (see figure 1.5). According to architectural historian Norbert Schoenauer, "This ideal was achieved by Ebenezer Howard's Letchworth Garden City and Dame Henrietta Barnett's Hampstead Garden Suburb – two turn-of-the-century communities featuring exemplary urban design and domestic architecture."[14]

Not only did the Letchworth model become popular through its high standard living, it was also a fantastic financial success (as it was built for-profit), an attractive incentive

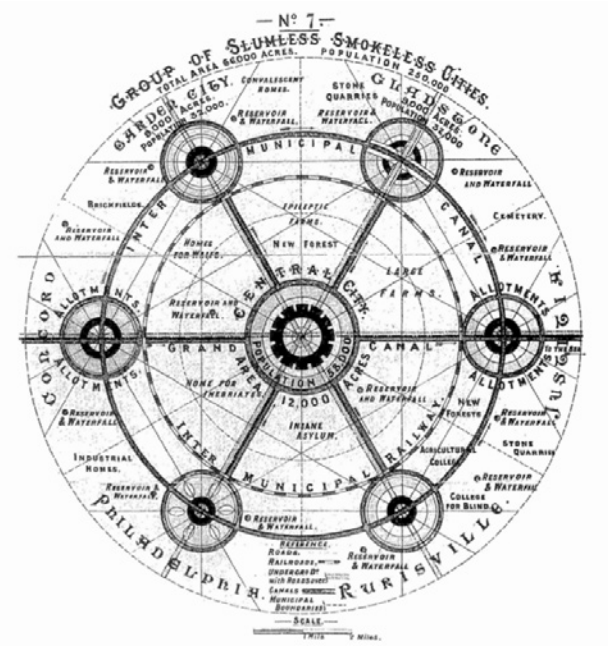

Figure 1.5 The original Garden City concept by Ebenezer Howard, 1902.

that inspired other Garden Cities to spring up around major English cities. Ultimately it was the financial and, "...practical successes of the English Garden Cities [which] resonated resoundingly with intellectuals and developers in the United States."[15]

America's first Garden City, Forest Hills Garden, appeared in 1911 nine miles from Manhattan. Knox (2008) notes that "Forest Hills Garden contained a kitsch-like mix of housing laid out with a distinctive neighborhood structure that convinced one of its residents, Clarence Perry, that the layout of a project could, if handled correctly, foster 'neighborhood spirit.'"[16] To achieve this Clarence Perry organized the layout of a prototypical neighborhood unit which would contain an elementary school at the center, surrounded by local stores, community space and, "bounded by arterial streets wide enough to handle through traffic."[17] Not only did the concept of 'neighborhood spirit' sit well with communitarians,[ii] the navigation traffic appealed to planners who were starting "to grapple with the implications of the spread of automobile ownership."[18] Perry's neighborhood concept subsequently gained traction in the 1920's and 1930's and was adopted into other landmark developments such as: Sunnyside Gardens, Radburn, Chatham Village, and Baldwin Hills Village.[19] Despite the progress and growing of Garden Cities, the majority of people seeking to escape the city had to settle for suburbs.

The Streetcar Suburb

The development and supply of Garden Cities was unable to keep up with the demand from middle-income groups. The general attitude of the time, according to Knox, was that by being "...cooped up in their cities with the factories, railroads, warehouses, and 'huddled' masses of 'ordinary' people,"[20] did not sit well with them. They preferred the picturesque suburbia which by this time entrenched itself as powerful cultural ideal. One where "the modern family could be freed from the corruption of the city, restored to harmony with nature, endowed with wealth and independence, yet protected by a close-knit, stable community."[21] This eager market attracted the attention of builders and developers, who with plenty of land at their disposal and a new building technology,[iii] could meet this demand. However, most of the land that was available was underserved by rail, and the trade-off was therefore a relatively

[ii] Communitarianism -As defined by Encyclopedia Britannica- "is the social and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community in the functioning of political life, in the analysis and evaluation of political institutions, and in understanding human identity and well-being."

[iii] Balloon framing, dating back to the 17th century, did not become a popular building technique until building parts (such as windows and kiln-dried dimensional lumber with tighter tolerances) became standardized. It was finally widely adopted when prefabricated parts were plentiful enough where to be installed using low skilled and low cost labor.

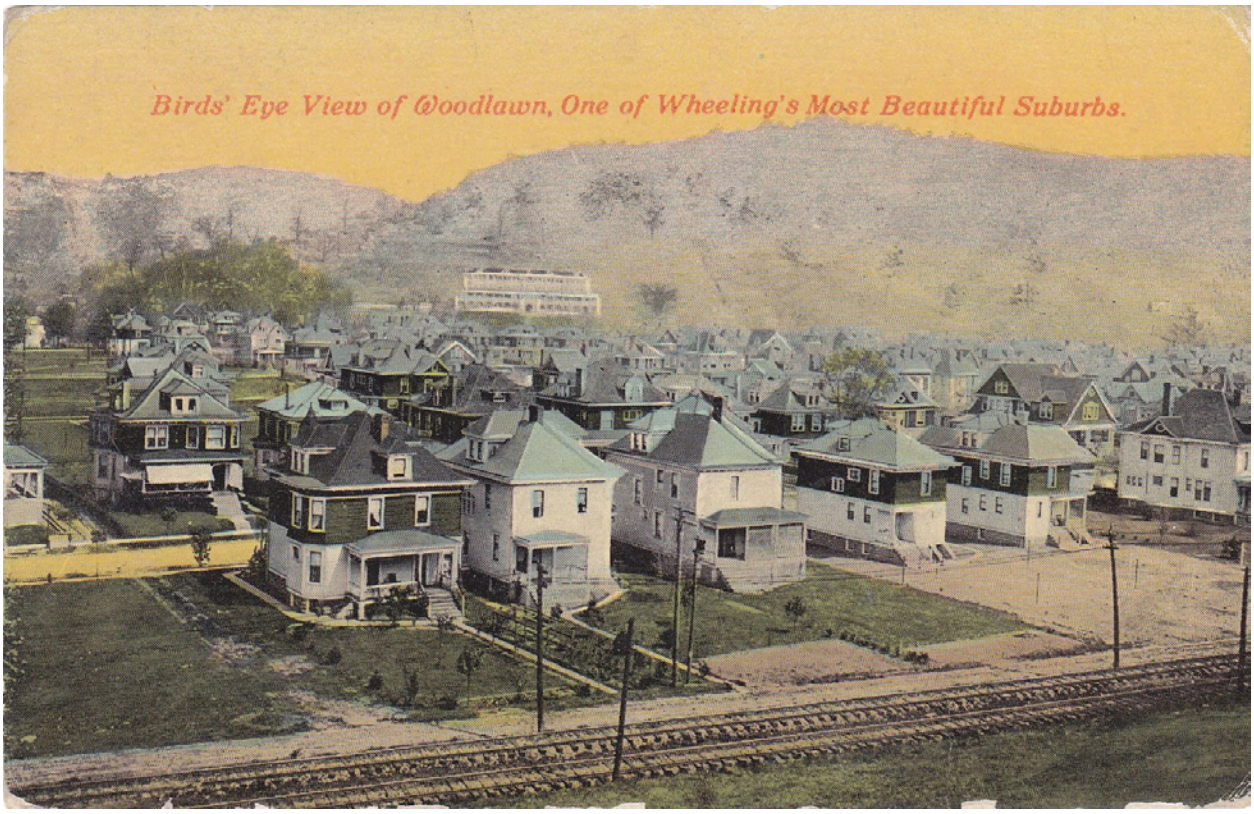

Figure 1.6 Streetcar suburb of Woodlawn, Pennsylvania. Circa 1907-1918.

cheap suburban house for cheap means of transportation. Then suddenly, in 1888, a revolutionary new transportation method was innovated: the electric streetcar.

Within 15 years of this advent more than 200 American cities had established an electric streetcar system. The convenience of the streetcar allowed a passenger to reach the downtown district from 10 miles out within 30 minutes, thus the streetcar greatly increased the territory in which residential neighborhoods could be developed (see figure 1.6). According to Knox, "So much land became accessible at once that the price of land was kept down, thus ensuring inexpensive suburban lots. Affordable land, combined with the cheaper operating costs of passenger-mile of the streetcar, ensured that the latent demand of middle-class families to flee the city became *effective* demand."[22] It should come to no surprise that this bourgeois lifestyle was attractive,[iv] for what "had only recently been luxuries for the few became standard services for the many: running water, electricity, gas, paved roads, sewers, police and fire protection, parks and public schools, and a mass transit system that connected the

[iv] That is not to say that this is equivalent to the contemporary view of what is bourgeois. Things that modern day society has taken for granted were luxuries at the time. During the industrial revolution, two to three room apartments in Europe would accommodate between 20-30 people.

neighborhood to jobs in the factory district and to downtown."[23] Additionally, these streetcar suburbs provided an outlet for the capital being accumulated by this new middle class, meaning that by investing in their own properties, they were investing into their net worth. As a result, according to Cultural Geographer Don Mitchell, "right from the beginning, the suburban landscape was commodified... Once the ideal had been established, and once the family had been remade to fit the landscape, even as the landscape was remade to fit the family, suburbia exploded, becoming, as it were, the only option for respectable middle-class life."[24]

Real estate developers jumped at the financial opportunity to tap into the middle-income groups in streetcar suburbs. By working hand in hand with streetcar operators they were effectively shaping massive swaths of cities' peripheries. Land that was built upon was located within walking distance of a streetcar stop, "so that the form of American cities in this era was characterized by fingerlike linear extensions from the pre-streetcar core. Within these extensions, development typically took the form of a continuous strip of commercial development and apartment houses lining the streetcar route, with gridded residential streets extending behind for a few blocks,"[25] (see figure 1.7). Streetcar operators also kept an artificially low rate to increase ridership. This subsequently made the streetcar suburbs

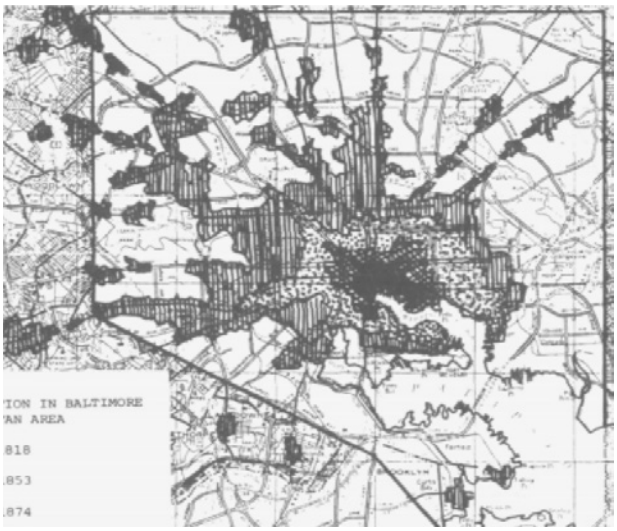

Figure 1.7 Map of Development in Baltimore. Shading shows the city's expansion by 1818, 1853, 1874, and 1918.

affordable to even lower-middle class families who were withdrawing from the core city leaving behind an ever-growing percentage of low-income households.[26]

The rapid expansion of these streetcar suburbs caused many to fall short of the "ideals and plans for architecture and urban design that intellectuals and designers had developed in previous decades."[27] With little oversight, regulations, and a "...fiercely competitive market...led to monotonous layouts, shoddy workmanship, incomplete infrastructure, and perfunctory landscaping."[28] The upper-middle class who resided in the older, adjacent, suburbs saw this substandard development attracting unwanted and undesired people close to their once fashionable neighborhoods. These fears lead to the creation of deed restrictions and restrictive covenants by subdividers in order

to make their product retain its exclusivity, attractively and stability.[29] With these traits, a new type of subdivider, a 'community builder,' was founded. They not only planned and improved large lots of land, but also built streets and houses upon the lots within. This complete package was then sold to the consumer. The implementation of this attractive suburban planning and development style has had a lasting impact on the landscape of our suburbs. Marc Weiss, Chairman and CEO at Global Urban Development, describes what these new products including:

The classification and design of major and minor streets, the superblock and cul-de-sac, planting strips and rolling topography, arrangement of the house on the lot, lot size and shape, setback lines and lot coverage restrictions, planned separation and relation of uses, design and placement of parks and recreation amenities, ornamentation, easements, underground utilities, and numerous other physical features were first introduced by private developers and later adopted as rules and principles by public planning agencies.[30]

Truly, the complete package.

The American Dream

As the lower-middle class families transitioned to becoming homeowners they found that high-interest rates, large down payments, and short-term mortgages essentially put them in the position of, as Knox describes these middle class families, laden with debt as,

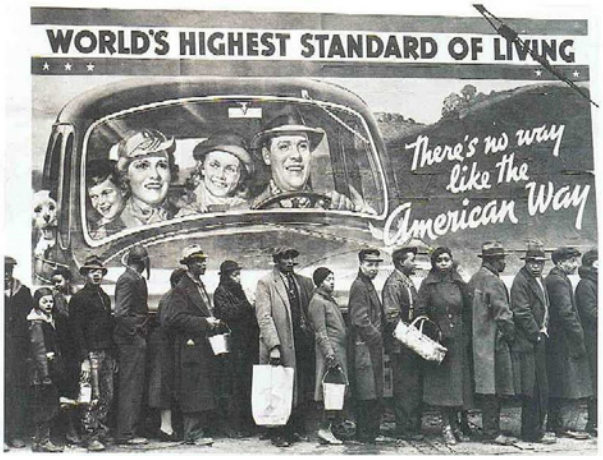

Figure 1.8 Louisville flood 1937. Credit: Margaret Bourke-White

"struggling 'up the down escalator,' entranced by dreams of economic security, saddled with debt, and confused by a false sense of social mobility."[31] To keep up the false luster of suburbia a monumental marketing effort was concerted which would ultimately lead to the 'professionalization' of real estate brokerage. According to Knox, in the wake of the streetcar suburbs, real estate brokerage was transformed "from a loosely and locally regulated activity, open to any unscrupulous operate, to a nationally organized occupation with significant influence on American housing policy and the powerful notion of the 'American Dream.'"[32]

Initially, the American Dream was used as a tool for Depression-era propaganda, one which aimed to affirmed the values of America's ingenuity, exceptionalism, individualism, and perseverance, culminating in the ultimate 'pulled up by your own bootstraps' rags-to-

Figure 1.9 Advertising for the American Dream, affordable middle class housing. Circa 1950's.

riches story (see figure 1.8). This promise of eventual economic and social mobility quickly grafted on the ideal of home ownership as a physical embodiment of an individual achieving the American Dream.

This notion, however, needed the affirmation that home ownership was not limited to a simple physical presence but a home existing as an intellectual and cultural object. Knox attributes this evolution to the cultural and political influence that real estate brokers had during this period; so powerful was this hegemony of homeownership that the single-family home on a quarter-acre lot became the 'American Dream' (see figure 1.9). And, the countless neighborhoods that emerged show that the vast majority of Americans bought into this dream.

The single-family home was inevitably promoted as the pinnacle of a consumer durable good, something worth sacrificing for, something worth exposing yourself to a mountain of debt. According to Jeffrey Hornstein, author of A Nation of Realtors: A Cultural History of the Twentieth-century American Middle Class, the matter of universal homeownership, "was merely the culmination of a long republican tradition linking civic virtue to property ownership. The American republic would be able to save itself from the degenerative ravages of historical time, class struggle, and urban corruption by providing all citizens with a home of their own in healthful, natural surroundings: American civilization would develop in space rather than time."[33] By circumventing the otherwise necessary slow accretion of cultural and societal values found in cramped and confining conditions of old-world, it was possible to expand a sense of authenticity and American ideals through the expansion of the *physical self*.

While the advent of local real estate boards and the national association contributed to crafting most of this dogma, it was their standardization of paperwork, commission fees, broker licensing and zoning laws which affected

the American landscape the most. These pre-standardized bureaucratic procedures were quickly adopted wholesale, and verbatim, by local, municipal and state governments. The pertinence of the profession became so great that when the housing market of the 1930's crashed, the National Association of Real Estate Boards was brought into the White House to work with President Hoover's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, and according Knox, "…secured a reduction of taxes on real estate and endorsement for a federal mortgage discount bank to facilitate long-term mortgages."[34] This conference also successfully persuaded the government to invest in economies of scale, thereby favoring large scale suburban developments financially backed by the federal reserve. By the mid-1930s, realtors managed to lobby for national housing policy that favored the privatization of space and for middle class suburban sprawl.

However, the suburbs would not be what they are today without the help of the mortgage insurance for lenders, Ford-ist production capabilities for large-scale housing subdivisions that, increasing automobile affordability. In the end these forces would set the stage for what was to come.

Setting the Stage

While the suburbs of America were in their initial stages, a rustic lifestyle, one which was close to nature, was an acceptable trade-off for the amenities provided by cities. Due to the lack of infrastructure installed by developers in early 1900s it was common that suburbs would lack sidewalks, street lighting, sewage systems, water lines, and paved roads. However, cities had garnered such a bad reputation that the trade-off for "clean air, nature close at hand, lots of elbow room, clean snow cover in winter, friendly neighbors, and a safe environment children"[35] made suburban living worthwhile.

However, unpaved roadways[v] soon became a thing of the past when automobile, oil, rubber and construction industries began the lobbying the government. Together with the Good Roads Association The Federal Aid Roads Act of 1916 was passed and enacted. According to Knox, this act, "required every state, as a conditional of federal aid, to establish a state highway department to plan, build and maintain interurban highways."[36] Five years later a second act was passed which provided additional funds sponsoring the construction of an integrated, long distance, road network. Then, ultimately, in the 1940s and the 1950s, the same group lobbied for the federal support of highway construction.

Good roads were crucial to the

[v] Unpaved roads were in a deplorable condition, according to Richard Weingroff, were, "They were often little more than trails that were muddy in the rain and dusty the rest of the time. Any long trip by automobile required not only time, patience, and ingenuity, but tire-patching equipment, tools, spare parts, and emergency food and fuel."[37]

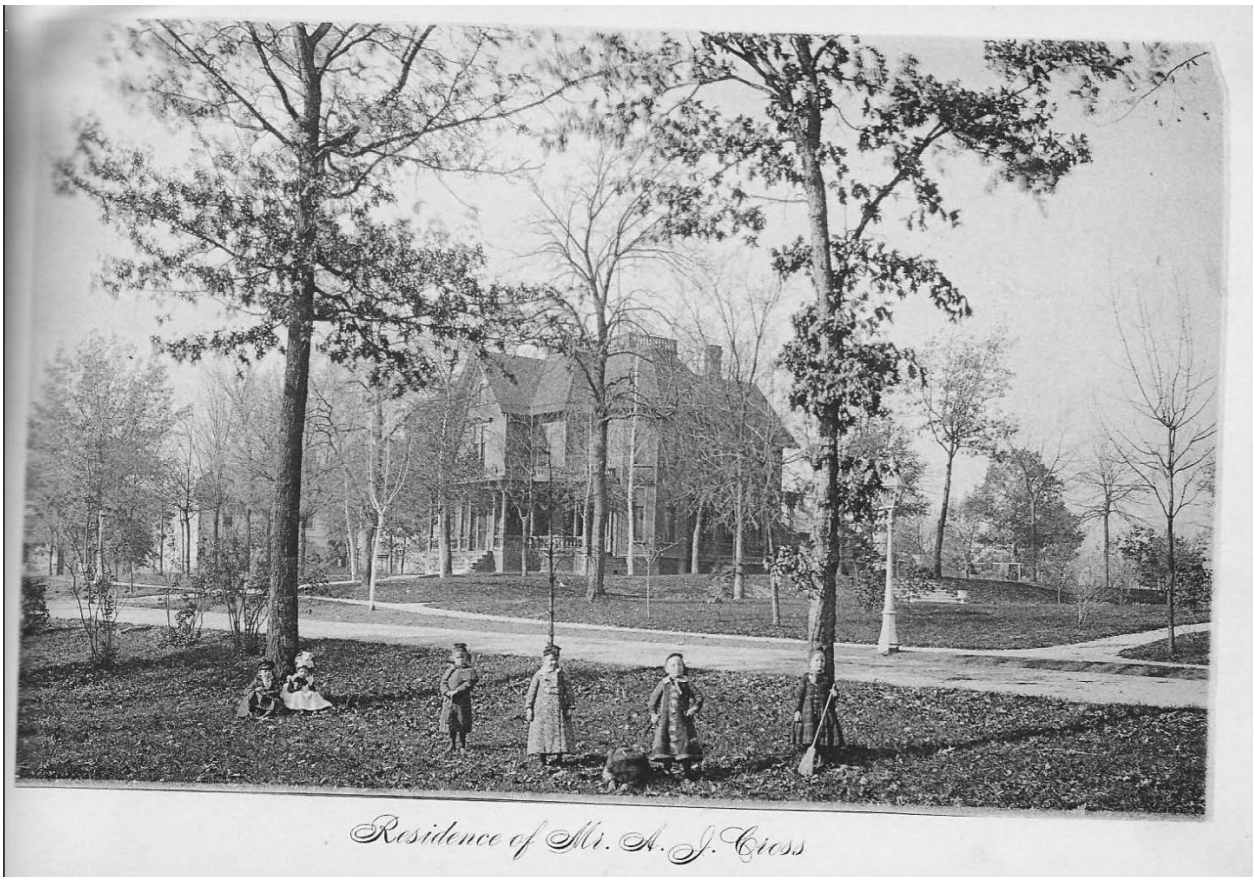

Figure 1.10 Residence of Mr. A. J. Cross. Riverside, Chicago. 1886.

proliferation of the automobile, but the homogenous identity of the suburbs was not sealed until the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in zoning law: Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co. (1926). The ruling was in favor of the municipality which granted it the "right to prevent a property owner from using land for purposes other than for which it had been zoned for." This was meant to give the municipality power 'to abate nuisances,' which would otherwise affect the impede upon the general welfare of inhabitants of a residential area. While this might seem appropriate to keep loud manufacturing and polluting industries out of a residential area, it also had the ability to exclude, "not only undesirable land uses in residential areas... but also undesirable people."[38] Suburban areas quickly incorporated themselves as municipalities under the presumption that their autonomy would better facilitate the pace and nature of growth.[39] These conditions for growth attracted a certain demographic - specifically young married couples with children - because, according to Schoenauer, suburbs were:

Generally unburdened by crime or welfare payments to the elderly, unemployed, or underprivileged, and with light traffic and

no subsidy to mass transit systems, suburban municipalities could levy taxes that were very low in comparison to those paid by city dwellers. These favorable circumstances meant that suburbs enjoyed good borrowing power, which was soon put to use to obtain roads for the upgrading of municipal services to match, or even exceed, those of the city... Suburbanites rightfully considered themselves very fortunate since they could now enjoy the best of two worlds: country living with urban amenities.[40] [see figure 1.10].

However, the suburbs would not stay 'country' for very long.

Post World War II and the Automobile

During World War II a temporary prohibition on new construction was enacted, creating a massive backlog of housing for returning veterans, somewhere between 3 to 4 million dwellings. As the postwar baby boom started, governmental policy was enacted to facilitate homeownership for veterans to provide housing for their growing families. Through the creation of the GI Bill, the Veterans Administration was formed and was seminal in introducing a mortgage program that vastly increased the Federal Housing Administration's loan powers. Shortly thereafter, the Federal Aid Highway Act (1956) authorized the construction of 41,000 miles of 'limited access' highway to link every major city (see figure 1.11). This provision is especially notable because it specified the creation of circumferential beltways to connect outlying regions to major radial interstate

Figure 1.11 Public exhibition for the new controlled access Interstate System. 1957.
Source: Federal Highway Administration

spokes via intersections.[41] These circumferential beltways subsequently attracted real estate development due to the increase in automobile ownership and little-to-no reliance on public transportation.

Automobile ownership is inextricably linked to explosion in suburban home ownership. In no more than a decade after the war the astonishing figure the ratio of one car per family was reached.[42] This translated into more than 52 million cars on the road just 10 years after the end of the war. This paradigm shift in personal freedom and mobility spurred an unprecedented level of suburban growth. David Harvey, argues that this 'long-term cycle of growth' was generated due to the immense pressure of outpacing the Soviet Union economically during Cold War and combating the Red Scare with affordable capitalism. Meaning that much of the suburban real estate sector was underwritten by massive

defense and freeway construction subsidies.[41] The consequence of this massive investment of capital resulted in the 1950s becoming the greatest period of growth for the suburban population. While major cities experienced a population growth of about 6 million people (11.6%), suburbs increased by roughly 19 million people (45.9%).[44] Almost all metropolitan areas experience much greater growth in inner suburbs than the adjacent core cities did. Between 1948 and 1973 the economy grew at a staggering rate, with the "Gross National Product increasing fivefold, medium income more than doubling, and home ownership rising by 50%."[45]

The effects of the population boom soon began to be felt in the later fifties and early sixties. As the suburbanites and exurbanites increased in number not only did they start to clog up the highways, they also acquired sufficient political clout. They began to lobby for new expressways to alleviate traffic congestion which was slowing down their commute to central cities. These motorists greatly impacted the fabric of cities, not only through the creation of more highways cutting through cities, but by their demand for inexpensive parking. Demolished building sites were a prime location for the creation of large parking lots which wasted precious inner city land not only in terms of new construction viability, but also the expensive infrastructure which it was serviced by.[46] Ironically, travel

Figure 1.12 Artist renditions from the 1950s of Robert Moses' proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway

time to the core of a city from a suburb became less than the travel time from a residential district of the city proper. As it soon turned out distance no longer dictated travel time (see figure 1.12).

It is perhaps this moment in time that suburbs fall into their most stereotypical era; that of the 'Sitcom Suburb.' Iconic television series from this era, such as Dennis the Menace and Leave it to Beaver, capture the utopian vision of ranch and split-level homes, all stocked with dozens of small appliances and other consumer necessities. Their homogeneity reinforced by both the familiar Euclid v. Ambler case, which effectively prohibited the zoning for, "apartments, duplexes, small houses, or small lots as well as stores and offices,"[47] and the Section 701 in the 1954 Federal Housing Act which granted federal aid to state governmental agencies to help plan single-family detached homes.

Figure 1.13 The post-war era created a frenzied marketing campaign to attract female consumers to alleviate the stresses and burden of housework.

Through this bolstering of ubiquitous single-family houses life began to imitate television or as author and urban historian, Dolores Hayden extrapolates, "Moms in high heels and dresses heated frozen dinner in commercials that seemed like extensions of family-oriented, prime-time programming. Thousands of television commercials and print ads used the model house as the setting for sort of goods from detergents to diapers, dishwashers to Dodge cars."[48] In the wake of these sitcom-suburbs, incomes, educational opportunities, levels of homeownership and the consumer goods soared (see figure 1.13). Americans began to re-envision what it meant to be an American and as such suburbia prospered and industrial cities began to decline: America had forged itself a new identity. This new ideology persisted through the cold war, one that advocated for the neoliberal values associated with the suburban and consumerist lifestyle. Professor of urban planning Robert Beauregard describes this image of the idyllic life as being,

Awash in consumer goods, enjoying nearly full employment, and blessed with high wages, the daily life of the 'average American' became a model for people around the globe. Suburban life anchored a standard of living commensurate with the nation's status as the leader of the 'free world' and established the county's economy and form of government as the best hope for affluence, democracy, and world peace.[49]

Suburbia became such a powerful driving force, not only physically, but emotionally as well that it started to became the lynch pin of American exceptionalism. Capitalism and suburbia triumphed over value of outdated European cities.

The Transition

However, this enchantment with the consumerist culture was not to last forever and would eventually lead to disappointment. The forces that drove suburban affordability also drove its standardization. Standardization slowly turned indifference and rationalization into to disenchantment (as Kant theorized would happen). Thus, suburbia began its transition from utopia to bland subdivision; one plagued by, "environmental degradation, social isolation, and malaise."[50] The illusion of this utopia was further shattered in the mid-1970s when the energy crisis struck, causing a fourfold increase in the price of oil. This surge in oil prices led American's to concede, in what Knox describes as their "ability and enthusiasm to pay for suburban lifestyles."[51] Perhaps more importantly this introspective started to shift society's affinity for the neoliberalism that had been at the forefront of governmental policy since the 1930s and search for other avenues towards individuality and authenticity. John Archer, in the footnote below, summarizes the conflict that suburbanites faced as they searched for their own democratized American dream.[iv]

Public perception has since shifted has awakened to the environmental and social damage that has been inflicted by ceaseless sprawl. The impacts of the once amicable and popular setbacks and zoning laws have thus been reevaluated, revealing that this low density has waster previous land and linking individual separated parcels to infrastructure has led to expensive infrastructure costs. Schoenauer (2003) estimates that if the street frontage of a bungalow is roughly three times that of a town house, it will be three times more expensive to install roads, water mains, sewer systems, cables, gas lines, street lighting and sidewalks. Additionally, services such as postal, police, fire, street cleaning and maintenance will increase as well due to the time it takes to cover the excess sprawl. Suburbia has also made public transit inefficient and uneconomical, and access to schools, shopping centers, community facilities and recreational areas are so far apart that they require private vehicles to reach,

[iv] *"The dream proliferated through ever more affordable mass products and standardized materials. A consequence of such affordability was that products were designed and marketed according to increasingly reductive stereotypes. And this points to an implicit contradiction embedded in the democratization of the dream: The ideal of a personalized dream individual defined and achieved is inconsistent with its material realization in stereotyped forms and mass produced materials."*[52]

Figure 1.14 A contemporary view into the suburban landscape

to the point that families often require two cars to ensure mobility for the whole family.[53] While these additional monetary costs can be offset by additional taxes and expenses upon the family, the damages that suburbia inflicts upon our social realm cannot be subsidized. The detached house has an isolating influence upon its inhabitants. Civic, communal and social aspects are what attracts people to an urban living (see figure 1.14). Social events such as picnics, concerts, sporting events, have been replaced with TVs, computers, backyard swimming pools and private barbecues. Families have been effectively cocooning themselves off from physical social contact. Growing commutes also harm us socially, mentally and physically. Road rage, countless hours spent in isolation instead of with family, hours spent sitting have been found to lead to: diabetes, higher cholesterol, depression, anxiety, decline in happiness, increased blood pressure, reduction in cardiovascular fitness, sleep deficiency, and back pain.[54,55] Suburbs once promised abundant open space, sublime nature and access to urban amenities, and but have spectacularly failed. Instead they have replaced the pristine countryside with untold environmental damages and countless miles of suburban blight. In the wake of this crisis there is an eagerness to once again experience not only a sense of community and belonging, and most certainly to Thoreau's chagrin, a relationship with nature as well.

End Notes

1. Schoenauer, Norbert. *6,000 Years of Housing*. New York: W.W. Norton (2003). Page 303.

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CHAPTER 2

Preface : This chapter will address the placelessness that has been created by suburban sprawl. As with Chapter 1, I will be relying on Paul Knox's, *Metroburbia, USA* for the first half of the chapter ending with historical analysis up until the 1990s and culminating in the creation of New Urbanism. New Urbanism formulaic and inauthentic approach to urban design led to other urban theories to follow in its wake. Theories such as Everyday, Ecological, and Landscape Urbanism have attempted to interject their own opinion on what is needed to ameliorate our contemporary urban and suburban environments. Due to this thesis' tabular rasa approach, a basic, but thorough, analysis was connected on these multiple -isms and with the goal to understand which aspects of these -isms lend themselves towards facilitating an organizational strategy for a large and complex site.

The Intellectuals Lash Out

Despite their eventual mass appeal, suburbs were not always seen as an attractive urban form. Even as early as the 1920s they had found opposition, with the historian Lewis Mumford being one of their most notable critics.[1,2,3] Mumford already saw them in their early stages to be only, "more and more of worse and worse."[1] Soon after the Second World War ended and suburbs began to spread like wildfire other critics began to denounce the homogeneity of the suburban landscape, satire too found an easy mark in ubiquitous blasé real estate advertisements.[i] By this time Mumford had developed such contempt towards suburbs that at a conference sponsored by the editors of Fortune magazine, he censured postwar suburban development as,

A multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabitated by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold… The ultimate effect of the suburban escape in out time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape seems impossible.[5]

Mumford found an unlikely ally in Jane Jacobs. Whereas Jacobs championed urbanism (albeit limited) in her famed book, The Death, and Life of Great American Cities, and the rich diversity it produces in central city neighborhoods, Mumford took a much more realist stance on the matter. Despite agreeing with many of Jacobs' stances, such as being against 'planned' development of any kind, Mumford's summary of Jacobs' book was that it was a "mingling of sense and sentimentality, mature judgments and schoolgirl howlers."[6] Despite their differences, Jacobs and Mumford united in the late 1950s against urban projects such as Robert Moses' expressway and the reckless urban renewal projects which were gutting inner cities.

However, in the suburban setting, while Mumford saw banal homogeneity, Jacobs' vision of hinged upon the biological form that cities took as they were shaped by its very inhabitants, something which was remiss in suburbia. For Jacobs, size and scale of a project did not matter. From garden city suburbs to developer subdivisions, and public housing projects, the instant architecture imposed upon these projects by professionals (architects, planners, and developers) conflicted with the 'close-grained diversity' that existed in cities.

[i] *"For literally nothing down…you too… can find a box of your own in one of the fresh air slums we're building around the edge of America's cities…inhabited by people whose age, income, the number of children, problems, habits, conversation, dress, possessions and perhaps even blood type are also precisely yours… [They are] developments conceived in error, nurtured by greed, corroding everything they touch. They destroy established cities and trade patterns, pose dangerous problems for the areas they invade, and actually drive mad myriads of housewives shut up in them."*[7]

Jacobs saw that the modernists intended to control and determine the urban environment, whereas the true glory of a city is found in its unexpected, spontaneous, and variegated nature.

Despite earlier decrying by literary critics, it was only when the "shocking rate and extent of low-density"[8] became so pronounced in the late 1960s that much of the popular critique began. Suburbia soon became synonymous with sprawl and attracted hosts of academics, architects, and planners to document the systemic problems associated with sprawl and the findings were startling. Their findings were as follows:

Suburban development destroys millions of acres of wildlife habitat and agricultural land every year. Rationalized, standardized, and tightly zoned suburban developments result in neighborhoods that lack visual, demographic, and social diversity. The economics of private subdivision led to a lack of public open space, urban infrastructure, and civic amenities. The low densities inherent to single-family suburban development result in increased traffic, long commutes, and a chronic dependence on automobiles. The environmental costs of automobile dependency include air pollution- and in particular the generation of millions of tons of greenhouse gasses from suburban commuters- and polluted run-off from roads and parking lots that constitute a third of more of suburban watersheds. The automobile-dependent lifestyles associated with sprawl, meanwhile, leads to increases in the rate of asthma, lung cancer, and heart problems. Stress resulting from commuting leads to adverse effects on marriages and family life. The fragmented and balkanized nature of American local government means that sprawl also intensifies intra-metropolitan fiscal disparities: outlying communities have a larger tax base and fewer social service needs to finance in comparison with central cities.[9]

Not all social commentators have demonized the suburbs. Joel Kotkin, a speaker on business circuits, has stated that people, in fact, enjoy living in suburbs and therefore all this fuss is for naught. Others have countered the anti-sprawl arguments with claims that they exist due to the free-market supply and demand and consumer preference. However, these neoliberal arguments focus on the individualistic benefits of suburban sprawl, such as the eventual appreciation of property, over the societal cost of sprawl which comes in the form of higher infrastructure cost, energy consumption, and pollution.[10]

Individualism and the 'got mine' attitude was only reinforced by the suburban lifestyle. This trend from social to individual attitudes is revealed in social science monographs from the 1950s and 1960s, where now the "...image of the suburbs as settings of loose-knit, secondary ties where lifestyles were focused squarely on the nuclear family's pursuit of money, status, and consumer durables and the privacy in which to enjoy them."[11] As the focus squarely fell upon the family, civic and communal life became superfluous, translating into a built environment where private backyards replaced public space. In the wake of this phenomenon, there was no longer any identifiable and

distinguishable space. Zoning codes and individualism culminated into placelessness on a grand scale. Unlike their urban counterparts, the mass of suburbanites were now ironically the ones 'leading lives of quiet desperation.'

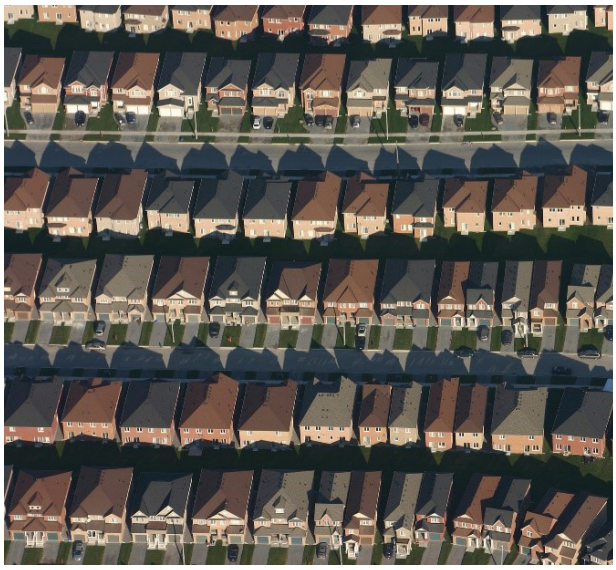

Figure 2.1 The Markham Suburbs of Ontario.

Placelessness

This suburban social condition has been a popular subject for all manner of media, from literature to movies, in which the placelessness of suburbia has become its most representative identity (see figure 2.1). Suburbia, according to James Howard Kunstler, author of *The Geography of Nowhere* (1993), is a "cartoon landscape of tract houses, car-clogged highways, parking lots, strip malls, and franchise food, with no sense of place."[12] However, aesthetic matters of the built environment are not the sole reason for suburbia's placelessness. According to Martin Heidegger's reasoning put forth in his 1951 essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," the sense of place is one that is socially constructed; where people define themselves through their sociospatial environment.[13] Heidegger believed that the social construction of place is an existential imperative for people in their search for relating themselves to the physical or material world. People rely on their homes, localities, and surroundings, to define themselves. Through repeated interactions and experiences, much like a toddler, we are able to identify patterns and qualities of our environment which slowly deepens our understanding of the world around us and allows us to develop an appreciation for intricacies and nuances that may appear. Furthermore, Heidegger believed that through repeated and familiar everyday routines, people will instinctively construct a pool of shared meanings. One where neighbors become familiar with each other's peculiarities and share experiences of their physical environment, particularly in public space, such as streets, markets, and parks. These public spaces, as a result, create a collective and 'self-conscious' frame of reference which then establishes itself an anchor for shared experiences and memories; thereby give a place meaning. In other words, if public space does not exist, as it often does not in suburbia, it becomes difficult to give a place meaning, especially by oneself.

Heidegger was aware of the effects that rationalism, mass production, and standardization would subvert the ability for people to believe their identical neighborhoods were authentic and unique. As people began to seek authenticity, they quickly turned to professionally designed and commercially constructed spaces that would return them to nostalgic traditions, but instead due to their privatization were sanitized and symbolized by kitsch. This type of 'authenticity through commercialism' became prevalent within suburbia through the creation of town centers, urban villages, and uptowns that exclusively offered high-end chain boutiques nested in the few pockets of pedestrian amenities, all the while surrounded by a sea of parking to attract customers who continue to depend on private transportation. These commercial operations have tapped into the underlying human psyche and have attempted to create a setting with a distinct sense of place, one which promises opportunities for casual and informal encounters. Sleek bars and comfortable pubs will stimulate meetings and gossip, various ways to purchase and consume food, a program for 'street markets' and plenty of opportunities to sit and people watch, in hopes that it will instill a sense of belonging, affection, and cultural identity. While these attempts to assuage the social isolation of suburbia may seem laudable, these microcosms have continuous consumerism as their ulterior motive.

Ownership of a large house at an affordable price has seduced a large population to bear horrendous commutes which often start at 6 a.m. or earlier. According to the American Community Survey data, 220 million adults, on average, spend a *minimum* of one and a half hours in their cars each day. Some extreme commuters can spend up to twice as much time in their cars per day as with their families. Harvard University public policy professor Robert Putnam (2000), author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, has analyzed the impact this has on individuals and has found that for every ten minutes of commuting time, social connections fall by 10%.[14] Commuting has been found to be physically detrimental, raising blood pressure and leading to musculoskeletal disorders. Psychologically, it has been found to increase hostility, lateness, absenteeism, and other adverse effects on cognitive performance. Teenagers also suffer from boredom and ennui due lack of mobility, turning tracts of suburbia into 'teenage wastelands.'[15]

Reactions to Modernism

This malaise of suburbia had not gone unnoticed within the professional design circles. These professionals attempted to insert their socially progressive, environmentally sensitive, and holistic agendas upon this urban environment.

However, despite their intentions, they were unable to carry this forward in the practice of reality. Knox attributes this to both the private-sector environment, where many professionals are forced to compete for commissions and the public-sector environment, in which the agendas of municipal boards mediate professional advancement. Progressive notions, initially geared towards public interest, and society are subsequently overshadowed by the bottom line of corporate and public-private investment. Additionally, financially success for planners and designers is a requirement should they wish to stay in business. This financial dependence often results in a compromise of values. Knox states the uncomfortable truth that "projects have to be hustled, ideas have to be sold, and unpalatable truths have to be spun into palatable propaganda,"[16] in order for even the most benevolent designer to stay in business.

Perhaps this is why after World War II design professions became fascinated with the latest developments in social science. Cutting edge research and theory aimed specifically at finding universal patterns and developing toolkits in "behavioral theory, regional economics, regional science, quantitative geography, systems analysis, and transportation modeling."[17]. Design professionals pursued projects in which they could prove to their benefactors, through the use of rationality and design efficiency, there were able to meet a project's budge and achieve social good, as their research and data would indicate. Inner cities were subjected to urban renewal and suburbs were imprinted with Euclidean zoning layouts for subdivisions and regulations that would inevitably be implicit in the creation of suburban sprawl.

Britain reacted to the lack of urbanity and human scale brought by Modernism through the Townscape Movement.[18] This 1950s urban planning ideology sought to reintroduce the 'art of relationship' and recapture 'place' through the use of sequencing street scenes, intimately framing public spaces and variation in built form[14] (see figure 2.2). This movement resonated with the American public, notably Paul Goodman, Jane Jacobs and Kevin Lynch. Lynch gained notoriety by distilling the legibility of town and cityscapes, in particular, how could urban designers harness human perception of the physical form of cities. Christopher Alexander also developed his 'Pattern Language' urban theory during this time which took a similar approach to Lynch. He sought to identify a 'language' of patterns among elements of built form and public spaces in hopes that such knowledge would allow for the creation of 'time-less' urban spaces.

However, one could question the merit of these urban theories. Knox, for instance, rationalizes that these theories are limited to

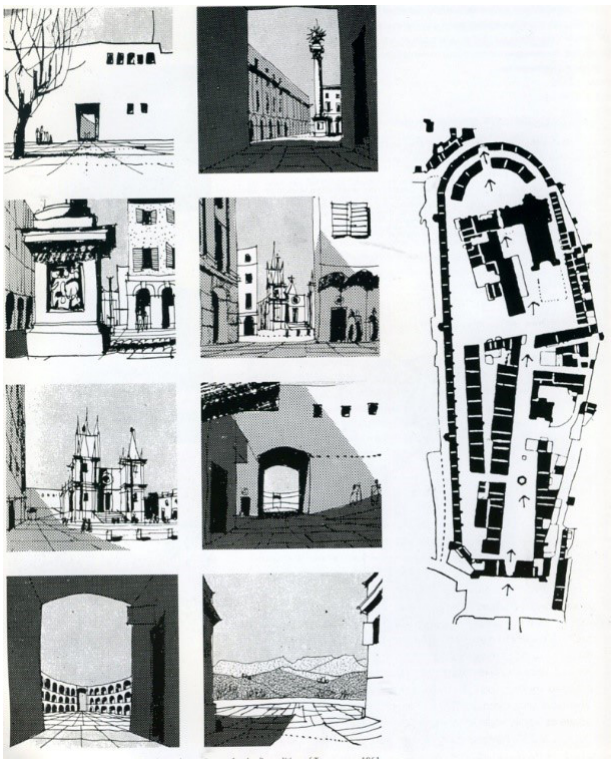

Figure 2.2 *Townscape,* Thomas Gordon Cullen. 1961.

the direct effect that physical space imposes upon humans, writing that "innovative methodologies deployed by both Lynch and Alexander were naive and unreliable, and their logic was based on raw environmental determinism (built-form stimulus -> human/social/cultural response)"[21] Nevertheless, these confirmation biases were unquestioned and became paramount in not only encouraging qualitative urban analysis but also increasing the awareness of urban landscape itself.[ii]

In addition to Britain, other parts of Europe began to react towards modernism as well. Behind many of the influential writings being produced in the 1960s and 1970s was a descriptive narrative on how Modernism ruined the urbanity. The writers of this era, the neo-rationalists, were greatly influenced by Italian architectural scholars, such as Aldo Rossi. His seminal work, Architettura della città, critiqued Modernism's denial of complexity, an essential component for the dynamicity of cities.[22] These neo-rationalists considered the built environment a 'theater of memory,' which according to Robert Delevoy is represented by "the fundamental types of habitat: the street, the arcade, the square, the yard, the quarter, the colonnade, the avenue, the center, the nucleus, the crown, the radius, the knot... So that the city can be walked through. So that it becomes a text again."[23] In the 1970s, Leon Krier, who will eventually greatly influence to New Urbanism, took these neo-rationalist core beliefs and advocated for "urban design based on identifiable, functionally integrated quarters, and of architecture with the proportions, morphology, and craftsmanship of the pre-industrial era, with set-piece ensembles of buildings (as in neoclassical Bath, Berlin, and St. Petersburg [see figure 2.3])"[24] In other words, disregard the contemporary and return to the past.

France also reacted to Modernism in its own way and saw rise in its own 'Provincial Urbanism' which, according to French poet and mathematician Jacques Roubaud, sought to create the terraces, the arrangements of streets

[ii] Ironically, this attempt at rationalization and quantitative analysis harkens back to Modernist methodologies to which they were so opposed to.

Figure 2.3 The Royal Crescent. Bath, England. Built in 1774. Upper-class row houses intended to rival the architecture and power of the aristocracy.

and plazas, the types of housing (and especially individual houses with yards), the perspectives, the source of architectural composition which made our cities so pleasing, particularly our provincial cities before being submerged, first by the growth of suburban tract developments, then the brutal push of the 'grand ensembles' with their density and severe geometry.'[25]

Port Grimaud is undoubtedly the most famous incarnation of Provincial Urbanism, designed and developed in 1973 by Francois Spoerry to resemble a fisherman's village (see figure 2.4). However, in this case, form does not follow function.

Ideals of Postmodernism

For better or worse, after the war, American architects remained rather distanced from all things suburban. Patterns of the 1950s and 60s, together with unprofitable nature of domestic architecture kept architects focused on large scale projects. According to Knox, "for most of the second half of the twentieth century, professional architects looked to accumulate fees from large public and commercial projects, while professional magazines celebrated innovation, spectacle and 'starchitecture'; and the star architects themselves competed to build in radical spectacular fashion."[26] This self-aggrandizing in the field of architecture was dominated by various attempts at aesthetic formalism by leading practitioners, such as Peter Eisenman, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Liebeskind, who according to Knox rely on their ability to "remain one step ahead of the capacity of their audience to understand or critique their work."[27] According to architect Bernard Tschumi, architecture, at this time, was characterized by "disjunctions and dissociations between use, form, and social values."[28]

Things began to shift as large corporate

Figure2.4 *Port Grimaud. Completed 1973.*

firms began to receive profitable commissions to design office parks, suburban town centers, and master-planned communities. The financial viability to operate in even the most mundane setting attracted the attention of design professionals as a whole.[29] Finally, the battle against the sea of monotonous suburban sprawl became a worthy and profitable task for architects to undertake. Soon university programs and practitioners alike advocated for transit-oriented development, neotraditional design, and a 'new urbanism' where rules and standards were proposed to help configure physical aspects of the built environment, ranging from regional, neighborhood, and community scales.[30] In this climate, Colin Rowe's 'Contextualism' found solid ground.[31]

The theory of Contextualism stresses that designers should draw from the existing urban fabric and place special emphasis on the streets, axis, and building mass in order to define urban space. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown became major proponents of this theory and expanded upon it profoundly. They urged design professionals to 'learn from Las Vegas' by tapping into the "creative energy of the contemporary vernacular of commerce and advertising."[32] As demonstrated in many other reactionary theories, hyperbole becomes the driving factor, and Learning from Las Vegas was no exception. The 'purity, unity and order of' modernity discarded in favor of a 'messy vitality, hybridity, ambiguity, and inconsistency' postmodernist world. Postmodern architectural theory bore little relation to other postmodern theories such as those related to social sciences and humanities. However, what it did resemble was the overall cultural shift towards 'living in the moment' rather than in a world of economic and scientific progress. Postmodernity, therefore, begat a consumption oriented attitude, an attitude which led to society's propensity for 'spectacle.' Postmodernity's lasting legacy has been its creation of society's propensity for 'shock and awe' design, and has permeated into countless spheres of creative outlets: from art (see figure 2.5) to music, from entertainment to the build environment. With this frame of reference, it should come no surprise that consumers were inspired by the ostentatiousness and imagineering and desired for more massiveness, spectacle, and affordable luxury. Real estate developers recognized these new consumer appetites and

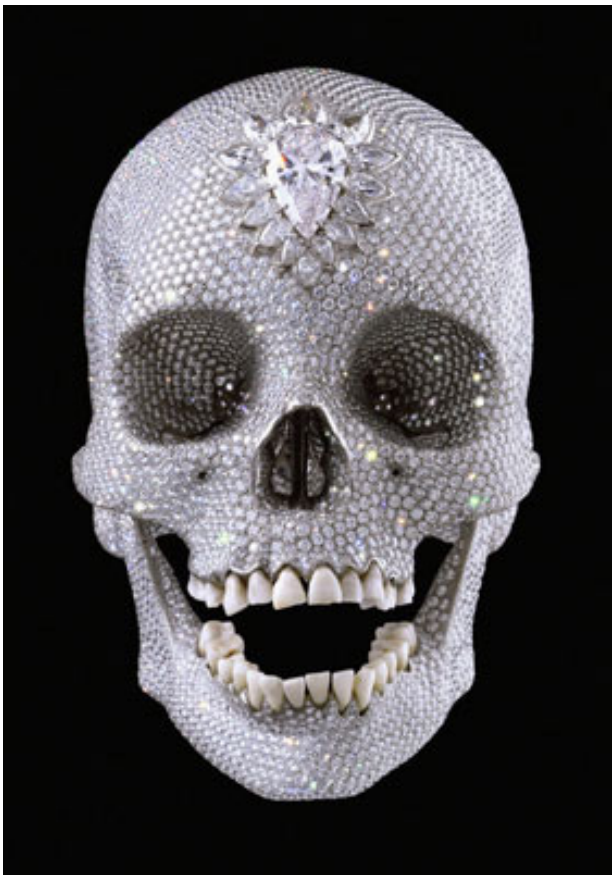

Figure 2.5 *For the Love of God*, Damien Hirst. 2007.

found high demand in private, master-planned developments flush with apparent opulence and historical motifs.

The demand for this new type of housing, one which offered status, amenity, and security, and a distinct identity, at a reasonable rate, was popular among the upper-middle class. There was also an added bonus: a sense of community, one that was offered as part of the package within these private master-planned communities. First, there was the sense of community stemmed from self-selected neighbors and were part of a certain class, with income and lifestyle to match. And second, there was the sense of place that was cultivated by developers through the use of elegant themes and sophisticated branding. Ironically, 'community' became both a commodity (an exclusive one at that), one which was central to the marketing success of new suburban developments.

Developers were not the only proponents for the use of neotraditional designs to recreate an 'old community setting.' In the early 1990s, renowned architectural historian Vincent Scully wrote, "the most important movement in architecture today is the revival of vernacular and classical traditions and their reintegration into the mainstream of modern architecture in its fundamental aspect: the structure of communities, the building of towns."[33] Scully's sentiments were the foundation of the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) movement which attempted to, "codify tract development in such a way as to create the look and feel of small-town, pre-World War II settings in which pedestrian movement and social interaction are privileged over automobile use."[34] As such, front driveways and garages were forbidden in TND guidelines because they reinforced the dominance of the automobile in the American culture and were incongruent with the traditional and vernacular style of housing that existed pre-World War II. Additionally, Cul-de-sacs were considered taboo because they were thought to

inhibit social contact between neighbors.

Architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are considered the initial torchbearers for Traditional Neighborhood Development.[35] For them, a 'traditional' small-town neighborhood could be successfully created through specific design codes which tended to mimic and reinforce pre-World War II housing styles. For instance: garages were to the located in the back of the lot, front porches were to be used to reorient the house towards the street, and housing was to be situated on small lots. Peter Calthorpe, a contemporary of Duany and Plater-Zyberk, wrote guidelines for his 'Pedestrian Pockets' concept which was considered a new typology for suburban development.[36] However, much of the contents were borrowed from earlier streetcar suburbs, which subsequently also gave rise to the Transit-Oriented Development' (TOD) concept which offers higher-density suburban housing within a quarter-mile (walking distance) of public transportation hubs. Calthorpe also wrote that these transits hubs should ideally be a light railroad station so traffic would never become an issue for commuters.

Pretext for New Urbanism

California's Local Government Commission sponsored an exercise to establish a unified set of codes for neotraditional urban design to which urban planner Peter Katz invited a small group of architects. This group included Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, among other additional TND advocates. Knox writes that the commission asked them to come to an "agreement about a set of community design and development principles in order to provide a vision for an alternative to urban sprawl."[37] Once the group had finalized their recommendations in fall 1991, they presented them to an audience of local elected officials at the stately Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite (see figure 2.6). These 'Ahwahnee Principles' were a series of progressive objectives which emphasized sustainability and sense of place. While these virtues were progressive, they were at the same time regressive in the sense that they promoted a return to 'pre-war small-town USA.'

Figure 2.6 Yosemite's Ahwahnee Hotel.

Developers, however, were already at the forefront anticipating the oncoming wave of nostalgia. They were already busy constructing upscale master-planned communities chock-full of vernacular references. It did not matter if they were in the style of Craftsman or

Mediterranean, authenticity meant little to the developer and in the opinion of KB Homes executive Ken Gancarczyk "the consumer can't tell the difference."[38] The monstrous size and appearance houses that resulted from this attitude seems to prove Gancarczyk right.

The proliferation of economic and cultural globalization in late twentieth had significant effects on the need for nostalgia. As culture, lifestyle, and material possessions began to become more diffuse and generic and increase affinity for local and ethnic identities are emerged.[39] Generic neighborhoods in generic towns with their generic supermarkets, shopping malls, office parks, and suburban subdivisions led people to feel isolated. The need for familiarity, roots, and place became powerful drivers. Even the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements picked up on this sentiment stating,

In many localities, people are overwhelmed by changes in their traditional cultural, spiritual, and social values and norms and by the introduction of a cult of consumerism intrinsic to the process of globalization. In the rebound, many localities have rediscovered the 'culture of place' by stressing their own identity, they own roots, their own culture and values and the importance of their own neighborhood, area, vicinity or town.[40]

In this search for personal identity genuine historic settings quickly became too expensive for most people, according to Robert Yaro, once president of the Regional Plan Association. Yaro saw the Traditional Neighborhood Development as an alternative, one that allowed for people to experience living in historic and vernacular settings. This faux traditional style did not sit well with design critics who characterized the style as, "mawkish; infantilized Disneyfication; camp architectural costume drama; backlot sets based on a decontextualized past or fictional histories; and as 'hyperreal' environments based on cultural reductiveness."[41] Richard Sennet described neotraditional architecture and Traditional Neighborhood Development as, "exercises in withdrawal from a complex world, deploying self-consciously 'traditional' architecture that bespeaks a mythic communal coherence and shared identity in the past," and that, "place making based on exclusion, sameness, and nostalgia is socially poisonous and psychologically useless: a self-weighted with its insufficiencies cannot lift the burned by retreat into fantasy."[42] By retreating into the past we have abandoned the search for what defines a generation into which generation we would like to be defined as?

New Urbanism

While this debated raged on, those that adhered to neotraditional design were dismissive about this criticism. In an effort to consolidate and move their platform ideas and principles were

[III] Peter Calthorpe absconded from this style-for-consumer critically stating, "I would posit that in my experience a practitioner, most of the neotraditional style comes from the marketplace itself, not from the intentions of any designers or an intentional design ethos."[43]

rebranded in the guise of 'new urbanism.' The newly forged Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) held its first meeting in 1993 and ratified a charter three years later. Andres Duany became the principal spokesperson for the CNU and was assisted by a cohort of supporters such as Peter Katz and journalist James Kunstler. Annual meetings, or congresses, were held to which successfully attracted interest among design professionals. These congresses resounded the Ahwahnee Principles drafted earlier by the TND.

This new organization established itself as a non-profit and according to Knox adopted the "idealistic stance founded on the credo that there is such a thing as 'good' urbanism and it can be propagated through the codification of design principles."[44] The principles that were drew upon came initially from East Coast communities which had enduring popularity, charm, and most importantly were walkable, diverse, and had urban atmospheres. Some of these notable places were Nantucket, RI; Alexandria, VA; Georgetown, D.C.; historic Charleston, SC; and Savannah, GA. These cities were selected by the new urbanists for their, traditional 'vocabulary' of urban design, including boulevards, perimeter blocks, and plazas, which reinforced the pedestrian scale of streets and public spaces. Duany and Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) then drafted these codes into what they refer to as a 'The Lexicon of New Urbanism' and shared it with the Congress for the New Urbanism.[45] This lexicon puts forth a basic urban planning ideology, that by defining urban space through building mass, having a connected network of streets, having patterns in built form and public space, and easy, identifiable and distinguishable quarters are key components to new urbanism.

The core belief of New Urbanism is that civic architecture and pedestrian-oriented streets can and will catalyze sociability and instill a sense of community among a population, reflected in Kat's (1994) book *The New Urbanism: Towards an Architecture of Community*.[46] Knox summarizes the physical character that is prescribed by the new urbanists,

Tree-lined streets are designed with a comparatively narrow width and lined with stoops or front porches as social buffer zones between the public realm of the street and the private realm of the home. As in Traditional Neighborhood Developments, cul-de-sacs are avoided; small lots, mixed uses, and side alleys are encouraged. Towns are conceived as being made up of a series of clearly identifiable neighborhoods and districts, with pedestrian-oriented commercial enterprises and civic space like schools, parks and community centers distributed throughout the neighborhoods, and vehicular traffic routed through boulevards that provide axes of orientation. Larger commercial activities are concentrated in a town center, along with significant civic structures such as churches and local government buildings. As a counter to the sprawl and splintering urbanism of the New Metropolis, each neighborhood, district, and town should have clear centers and

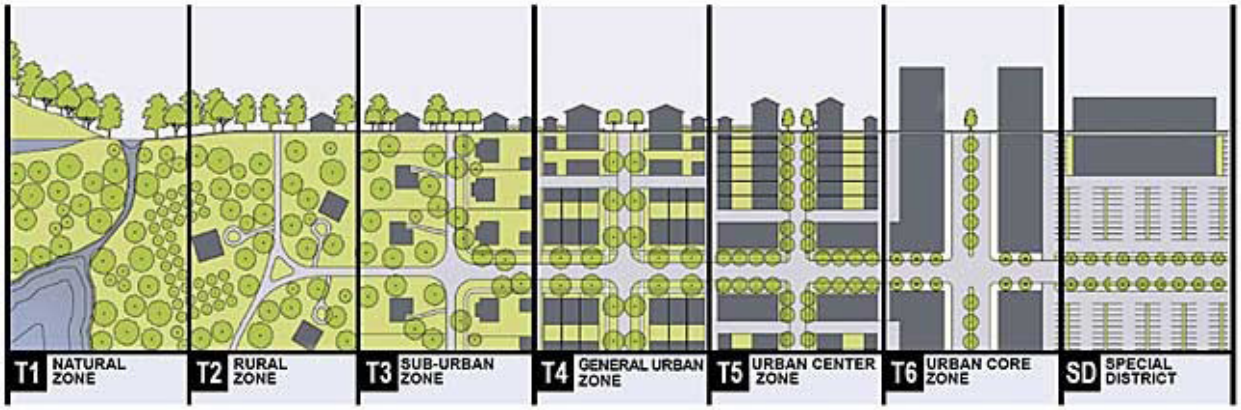

Figure 2.7 The Model Transect. Increased development towards the higher T-zones (T5 and T6) and decrease to the agrarian and untouched natural conditions (T2 and T1).

edges, as in Geddes's idealized transect of a 'natural' region. The regional scale is also an important dimension…allowing towns and their surrounding countryside to be integrated into sustainable planning framework that can address issues of air and water quality, transportation, equity, diversity, and sprawl.[47]

Despite these attractive qualities, they have been likened to a 'painting-by-numbers' approach for urban designers. A whole host of prescriptive codes and regulations have been written, including but not limited to: Regulating Plan, Urban Regulations, Architectural Regulations, Streets Types, and Landscape Regulations. These regulatory codes then provide a template for design and reinforce the density transects which have been divided into six respective zones (see figure 2.7). This transect forms the underlying principle of DPZ's SmartCode which provides a single, comprehensive, streamlined document, laying out a framework for zoning, subdivision regulations, urban design, public works standards and basic architectural design.

Douglas Kelbaugh, former dean of the Taubman College at the University of Michigan, and proponent of New Urbanism believes that despite this top-down approach New Urbanism still aspires to build and repair existing communities. This not only includes creating an equitable and diverse mix of people, from various ethnicities, ages, races and incomes, but creating public space to make citizens feel that they are part of a culture, part of something greater, and tied into an ecology connected to natural cycles. Kelbaugh also believes that physical form can determine (or be deterministic) social behavior, and that "good design can have a measurably positive effect on sense of place and community… essential to a healthy, sustainable society."[48] Despite these altruistic aspirations, New Urbanism has received its fair share of criticism.

This codified design approach appeals especially well to developers wishing to reduce complications, and the increased costs associated with providing customer choice in suburban development market. As more and more developers and master-

planned communities referenced Traditional Neighborhood Development and New Urbanism, Modernist design critics condemned such settings as, "mawkish, camp, costume drama; and as 'hyperreal' environments based on cultural reductiveness."[49] Nan Ellin disapproves of New Urbanism on the basis of its nostalgic tendency to "drag and drop forms from other places and other times," and where the urban planning strategy relies on "form following fiction."[50] Kenneth Frampton responded to New Urbanism's nostalgia by forming his own theory of "critical regionalism" calling on architects to focus on "genuine local materials, crafts, topographies, and climate."[51] Knox has voiced his criticism on New Urbanism as being a simple conglomeration of past theories[iv] and that there is essentially nothing 'new' about New Urbanism besides employing a clever and sophisticated marketing and branding strategy. However, the most poignant criticism of New Urbanism is one that also befell Modernism. Specifically, that it privileges environmental determinism and spatial form in favor of social process. Edward Robbins accuses New Urbanism of having "a kind of essentialism, in which all aspects of the complex and diverse urban world is reduced to a set of singular and authoritative principles summarized in a set of simple statements and strategic visual and verbal discourses."[52]

New Urbanism theorist, Jill Grant, disregards this criticism, claiming that the success of new urbanism is not based upon its nostalgic appeal, but its appeal to public officials. According to Grant, New Urbanism has the ability to allow "...planners to operate without worrying about the messiness of divergent claims."[53] This allows for a shortcut in the otherwise laborious public approval process that can stunt a project indefinitely due to the disparate nature of public opinion. Despite the apparent shortcomings of New Urbanism, it has given planning and urban design new vested interests and ideas, in what was once a field dominated by bureaucratic issues overly concerned about land use and zoning. And perhaps most importantly it has also brought back urban conversations which stress the importance of livability, quality of life, sustainability, and authenticity.

Lessons from New Urbanism

Despite the financial success of New Urbanism, it is important to look at how the projects function

[iv] "Intellectuals' utopias of the nineteenth century, City Beautiful; Nolen's association of Urban design with the tenets of classical civic ideals; Geddes's natural region and urban-rural transect; Clarence Perry's neighborhood unit idea; Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker's assertion of traditional and vernacular design; the precedents of garden suburbs of the late nineteenth century, the master suburbs of the 1920s, and the communities of the 1960s and 1970s; the British Townscape Movement; Richard Sennett's ideas on importance of public space; Christopher Alexander's notion of pattern language; Kevin Lynch's concept of legibility; and the prescriptions and inclinations of new-rationalism, Provincial Urbanism, Contextualism, and Postmodernity."[54]

Figure 2.8 Seaside, Florida. 1981.

for their occupants after having several decades to be 'settled in.' Seaside, Florida, (see figure 2.8) for example, became so successful that its exorbitant home prices could only be afforded by the very affluent, effectively turning Seaside into a seasonal and second-home neighborhood. Laguna West, California, despite having much higher density than its surrounding suburbs, residents still require personal vehicles for shopping, errands and commuting to work. Celebration, Florida, which is owned and operated by Disney, has many of the typical Main Street USA amenities with the caveat that they are artificial. Even the town's center caters to tourists so shopping by residents must be done outside of the actual town. Kentlands, Maryland: an assortment of housing types, from detached single-family, townhouses, condominiums and apartments in proximity to the town center and amenities. However, despite its high environmental satisfaction, it is an enclave of affluent upper-middle-class households. In fact, New Urbanism became so popular that its brand identity was assumed by many master-plan community developers who were advertising their projects with the New Urbanism label. These communities had the 'look' of new urbanism (e.i. traditional housing types, wide sidewalks, etc) but did not include any of the actual regulations and codes endorse by the CNU.

As time wore on, both the 'real and faux' New Urbanism projects proliferated and started to face additional criticism outside of the field of architecture. Alex Marshall, author and senior fellow in New York City's Regional Plan Association, critiqued New Urbanism on its naivety and lack of understanding how cities actually work. Marshall states that 'real urbanism' emerges from a city's infrastructure and political economy and that developments of only 5,000 to 10,000 people cannot support a viable town center that is both self-sufficient economically but also can adequately meet the needs of the population wryly observing, "This point has always confused architects."[55]

The Rebuttal

The backlash of New Urbanism's prescriptive design doctrine came in the form of Everyday Urbanism, an approach to the urban realm which embraces the messiness and spontaneity of the city. John Leighton Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski are advocates of Everyday Urbanism and have authored a seminal book on the subject titled, Everyday Urbanism. The main discourse of Everyday Urbanism relates to taking an informal bottom-up approach to urbanism; one which builds upon the every day, the ordinary, and realities of life with little esteem for a utopian built environment.[53] In Everyday Urbanism's search for authentic city living, they have found that the sanitized utopia of New Urbanism is an anathema to that what actually occurs in an unpredictable, spontaneous, and messy city-life. According to the New Urbanists, it is these "elements that remain elusive: ephemerality, cacophony, multiplicity and simultaneity,"[57] which comprise the ideal environment.

By utilizing a grassroots populist agenda, the driving factors behind a 'design intervention' are much more informal, more like a conversation. This bottom-up approach tends to downplay the importance and benefit of physically designed space and its impact on social behavior due to the ability of user groups to adapt and shape the environment around them. According to Margaret Crawford, in reference left over voids created by suburban sprawl, this "Everyday space is often described as generic and generalizable. But, once you closely observe the people who inhabit it and the activities that take place there, it becomes highly specific."[58] Thus, in such an open-ended and indeterministic environment, the true autonomy of the user can exist. Everyday Urbanism frequently cites indigenous and migrant groups, who are often relegated to marginal and generic spaces, and attribute their behavior to their resourcefulness and imagination, able to convert banal and defunct 'space' into lively places simply through ad hoc intervention. Spaces such as vacant lots, parking lots and, private driveways are transformed into places of commerce, gathering, and cultural significance. Especially noted are neighborhoods like the barrios of Los Angeles, where public markets triumph over chain stores and ethnic street art is far more valued than trite traditional civic art.

In contrast to conventional real-estate development, Everyday Urbanism is more "intentional, ideological and democratic than the generic 'product' that mainstream bankers, developers, and builders supply to an anonymous market."[59] And as such, promotes a public dialogue and the participation of local citizens in a highly open-ended and democratic forum where the community participates with designers, thereby taking the 'everyday

condition' and co-opting it for and by the public. This results in the creation of real public markets and street life that are also far more resilient to market forces than the standard generic product. However, there are limits to this type of urbanism evident in its choice of precedents.

Everyday Urbanism is largely focused on developing countries or impoverished ethnic neighborhoods. While this might be generally relevant in our current age of mass urbanization, where global cities in India, Brazil and Africa are experiencing massive booms of informal squatter settlements that defy governmental control; Everyday Urbanism's promotion for autonomy and self-regulation is far less relevant and applicable in developed countries and cities where health codes and zoning are far more rigid and litigious.[v] Therefore, the core advantage of Everyday Urbanism is in its ability to serve and acknowledge an otherwise underserved and marginalized population that would otherwise be subverted by wealthier interests. However, as market forces become more pronounced in a region, wealthy landowners and developers will pursue their own financial interests, usually thwarting any bottom-up approach to land use.

However, there is another underlying issue in Everyday Urbanism, specifically in its vague form of colonial anthropology. Where the 'Modern Man' comes in and studies an indigenous population and their 'primitive customs,' and attempts to save their endangered culture by reinforcing it against the invaders. While Everyday Urbanism attempts to ameliorate a suite of urban ills, it can only operate through the unfortunate lens of colonial assumptions of culture and space. While Everyday Urbanism runs in contradiction with New Urbanism, these two urbanisms fall prey to their own ultimate goals. The first runs the risk of venerating everyday prosaic events from foreign cultures and the second risks gentrification, homogenization, and sterilization through capitalist generalities. Douglas Kelbaugh's shares a similar opinion, writing, "If the New Urbanist romanticizes a mythic past, the Everyday Urbanist overestimates the mythic aspect of the ordinary and ugly."[60]

Varying the Approach

Cities tend to be more complex than either of these two urbanisms pretend them to be. As the discoveries and exploration the cities from antiquity continue, archeologists are perpetually astounded that even with Stone Age technology, humans have been able to create vibrant cities through the infrastructure. The

[v] There are opportunities for Everyday Urbanism in major US cities, such as LA and Detroit, where governmental oversight and enforcement are not as stringent. However, Everyday Urbanism requires a very particular set of circumstances to become a viable urban design approach and therefore cannot use effectively in a 'first-world' city.

mitigation of natural disasters (e.i. flooding, fire, earthquakes) and preparation for future catastrophes (e.i. famine, war) was imperative for a culture to flourish (see figure 2.9). Even to this day, most cities are organized around their environmental and biophysical externalities. However, the difference between cities of antiquity and those in the present day is the unprecedented expansion of globalization and harmful technology. Despite the dispersal of goods in this global network, the environmental damage that they have inflicted (and continue to inflict) is still heavily localized.[vi] This is evident when we see images of massive garbage piles, excavated mountains, and even economic problems. Localized environmental damages dramatically shape the wellbeing of the nearby population.

This backdrop has given rise to Landscape Urbanism, an urban planning theory seeking to organize a city through its landscape, rather than the design of its buildings. Despite having floated around in urban planning discourse since 1997 it has recently gained notoriety. Notable figures such as Charles Waldheim, Mohsen Mostafavi, James Corner of James Corner, and Adriaan Geuze have been large proponents of Landscape Urbanism and its potential proceed New Urbanism's monocultural capitalist infused 'public space.' Charles Waldheim, one of the more prolific writers upon the subject, describes Landscape

Figure 2.9 Roman aqueducts - Segovia, Spain. 112 AD.

Urbanism as a critique on the neotraditional urban design that has been proliferated over the last two decades. Waldheim professes that it is a response to "urban design's perceived inability to come to terms with the rapid pace of urban change and the essentially horizontal character of contemporary automobile-based urbanization across North American and much of Western Europe."[61] Additionally, traditional Urban Design strategies have failed to cope with and properly address the severely degraded environment left behind in our deindustrializing landscape.

Waldheim expands upon these problematic aspects of urban design with three major points. First, he cites that New Urbanism only accommodates nostalgic tendencies cultural politics, ultimately regressing into '19th-century pattern-making.' Instead of

[vi] This is not there say there is no delocalized environmental damage. Climate change, changes in ocean acidity, depletion of the ozone layer, might be global events but still require localized interventions to be addressed.

espousing upon "mythic images of a lost golden age of density,"[62] urban design should focus on the contemporary urban conditions in which we work and live. The second point that Waldheim raises is that mainstream urban design practice has become far too concerned about the capitalistic aspects of environments. This has led to what he refers to as the 'Manhattanism' of the public realm, where urban spaces are designed to be destinations of consumption for the wealthy and home to elitist enclaves searching for a luxurious lifestyle. Waldheim's last point concerns itself with urban design practice itself. Once an important interlocutor between design and planning, it has trended toward becoming an "insular enterprises concerned with public policy and urban jurisprudence to the exclusion of design and contemporary culture."[63] To avoid trapping ourselves in stasis or regressing to a typology of the past, Landscape Urbanism promotes that we address the needs of our contemporary society through contemporary measures. Albeit still in a nascent form, it is claimed that Landscape Urbanism is capable of offering an approach which is, "culturally leavened, ecologically literate, and economically viable model for contemporary urbanization as an alternative to urban design's ongoing nostalgia for traditional urban forms."[64]

Under this pretext, the validity and usefulness of the urban planning practice come into question. Specifically, what is the role of the planning profession in regards to a project's conception and implementation? According to a survey of international contemporary landscape design practices, landscape design strategies proceeded those of planning in the majority of instances. This is especially the case where ecological understanding facilitates urban form and order, where design is considered not only through land-use, but through a hybrid lens of environmental understanding, public participation and through the culture of design.

As environmental knowledge and concern continue to mount, this sort of process will undoubtedly relegate traditional planning and policy professions to the sidelines. Thus, one could impart that urban form will be ultimately be determined not through arbitrary design, but through ecological processes and by societal/cultural wills and attitudes.

A Touch of Modernism

Urban planning has found itself in a precarious position. In its current form, it is restricted to choose between either a top-down authoritarian or a bottom-up communal decision-making approach. It must also choose between accepting the ideals of an educated design culture versus the society's tendency towards the organic and vernacular. Planning must also choose between if it is to follow a welfare state

approach or respect the trends and demands of the free market. In the search for answers, Landscape Urbanism has broached upon the territory of a modernist revival. While this might seem like a radical approach returning to a movement that was described as being unable to produce any 'meaningful' and 'livable' public realms,[65] was incompatible with the historical consciousness of the city,[66] and was unable to communicate with multiple audiences,[67] Charles Waldheim still defends that this is the correct tactic towards urban planning.

When modern architecture was officially pronounced dead by postmodern architectural historian Charles Jencks in 1977,[vii] the coincidental surge in oil prices that shortly followed, marked a central tipping point, one which would shift consumer markets into diversifying.[68] Thus, the new ideals of postmodernism, described by Waldheim as a being 'scenographic' in nature (see figure 2.10), were incompatible with the modern society's desire for a decentralized urban form. The new technological, structural and economic conditions which incentivized, and continue to incentivize sprawl show little regard to the vicissitudes in architectural styles. Thus, while postmodern architects bickered over matters of aesthetics, very little architectural discourse focused on the needs of a contemporary society, one which Modernism was beginning to address. While Modernists did fail in certain

Figure 2.10 Gehry Residence (1978). A visual social commentary on Los Angeles' urban fabric.

aspects their ideals of meeting the needs of a contemporary society have still not gone out of vogue.

And as the social and environmental disasters of industrialization and sprawl unfolded, postmodernism sought refuge in the comforting forms of nostalgia; especially in the stability and security that seemed inherent to traditional European cities. The rise of the urban design profession in the 1970s and 1980s, inspired by a return to traditional nostalgic form - one which essentially replaced the discipline of contemporary city planning - railed against modernism for desecrating traditional urban values, especially those of the pedestrian scale, street grid continuity, and contextual architectural character.[70]

Despite postmodernism preaching the values of traditional city making and

[vii] Pruitt-Igoe housing projects was one of the first demolitions of Modernist architecture (April 22, 1972), and inspired Jencks to refer to this day as being "the day Modern architecture died."[69]

commodifying 'good' urban design in an attempt to appeal to a diversifying consumer market, it could not compete with the appeal of a mobile capital market, glamorized automobile culture, and the American dream tied to decentralization.[71] The contemporary city, one that is indeterminate and in constant flux, was not compatible with the architectural permanence inspired by traditional European cities. What was needed was the ability to for urban spaces to adapt and meet the needs of the contemporary city and its inhabitants.

By looking back into antiquity and into the future we can infer that infrastructure systems are integral to a city's vitality. Waldheim takes a similar approach and links the importance of integrating infrastructure with public landscapes by claiming that together "they engender the very ordering mechanism of the urban field itself, shaping and shifting the organization of urban settlement and its inevitably indeterminate economic, political and social futures."[72] Therefore, by organizing the urban public realm through infrastructure one is able to avoid the pitfalls of urbanistic nostalgia and is able to meet contemporary social and environmental needs, which will ultimately culminate in a sustainable outcome. To do so requires an intimate understanding of the flows in and out of a system/place, but one needs to be wary not to limit this to an exclusive ecological understanding.

This will circumvent the false pretense of Ecological Urbanism which purports that there are only two choices: one of critical cultural relevance and on of environmental survival. This attitude stems from an antiquated disciplinary rift in ecologically aligned landscape architects who believing that cities have failed to incorporate and integrate natural process. This has resulted in designs which have overcompensated for this neglect to the extent that restoration and regulation exclude urban form and process.[73] Additionally, these one-sided designs purport they can replicate the functionality of semi-ruralized ecological systems in urban settings. While the integration of a natural systems thinking in an urban environment might seem noble, it masks the truth that natural systems are in fact unable to deal with the amount of waste and pollution that will enter the system. Landscape Architect and theorist, James Corner, derides Ecological Urbanism practitioners for falsely believe that by creating a fictitious image of 'nature' they will be able to instill everybody with "a more reverent relationship with the earth and with one another (as if relocating millions from cities to the countryside will actually somehow improve biodiversity and water and air quality)."[74] Despite being a contemporary practice, one that is able to avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia, Ecological Urbanism, fails in a similar manner because it

fabricates reality to the public through the use of imagineered 'natural' settings disguising the real infrastructure processes (be they natural or manmade). The distinction between ecological urbanism and landscape urbanism lies in how the various systems will be hidden, revealed, ignored and acknowledged.

Approaching Systems

When considering a systems approach it is important to note that neither the spatial forms nor aesthetics that has held back urban design. As postmodernism has shown us, the future of urbanism lies in the understanding of process, rather in matters of esoteric aesthetics which has until recently been at the forefront of urban 'design.' Understanding the implications of how things work, not only in space but also in terms of time, is an important aspect that is often overlooked. Cultural geographer David Harvey claims that modernist urban planning and New Urbanism have failed because they presume that history and process can be determined through spatial form. Harvey argues that designers and planners have struggled to come to terms that form and aesthetics are but a minuscule component in public space, and that advancing space requires a "more socially just, politically emancipatory, and ecologically sane mix(es) of spatiotemporal production processes,"[75] which remain incredibly difficult to orchestrate and organize. Most of the time these processes, such as capital accumulation, deregulation, globalization, environmental protection, will ultimately direct the shape of our urban realm and cannot be controlled by whims of planners and designers.[76]

While this might initially dissuade us from intervening in the physical urban environment in the first place, it must be understood that a myriad of systems and flows, which, move, sustain and manifest themselves, do so not only in time but in space as well. A landscape, therefore, becomes especially well-suited for this task because it is a medium upon which the formations of ecological and economical orders can become apparent. Unlike architecture, which currently still suffers from the postmodern mentality of matters such as vanity and stylistic concerns, landscape is able to respond to structural changes in a societal, industrial, economic, urbanization, and infrastructural capacity. Additionally, not only can landscape possess an aesthetic characteristic it can also possess an adaptable tertiary function, which can be explored through the conflation of natural and engineered systems.[77]

While Landscape Urbanism has existed as a formal theory for nearly two decades and can be argued dates back much further than that, it has intentionally resisted coming up with a concrete formulaic doctrine in order to stay flexible. However, James Corner has

crafted his own four tenants of Landscape Urbanism which he describes as 1) Process over time, 2) Horizontality, 3) Working Methods/Techniques, 4) The Imaginary, in his essay Terra Fluxus.[78] These principles can be visualized by looking at some of the traditional urban landscape such as Boston's Back Bay Fens which were created through a series of land reclamation projects in the 1800s in order to eliminate the health and aesthetic issues associated with the sewage and effluence being released by Boston. Not only did it serve to create and increase Boston real estate values, it works in conjunction with the area's underlying hydrological processes. Stuttgart is another prime example where its greenway corridors direct fresh mountain air into the city, flushing out any accumulation of heat and smog. While at face value these types of areas of vegetation might seem like one-dimensional 'green space' they are in fact important infrastructural systems for many cities; ones which contribute to the well-being of urban populations. Corner writes that there are many projects which are inherently landscape urbanist in function despite being conceived through differing rationales. These can be described as landscapes which have "the ability to shift scales, to locate urban fabrics in their regional and biotic contexts, and to design relationships between dynamic environmental processes and urban form."[79] More recent examples of Landscape Urbanist projects can be found in the works of Stoss LU (see figure 2.11), which operates under the principles that water, and its potential, must always be under constant consideration, surfaces must have a range of flexibility and permanence and are able to host multiple events and possibilities, and lastly that there is a tension between local and exotic species.

Although these examples have been relevant in more urban contexts than in the context of suburban sprawl, landscape urbanism has been advocated to be highly effective here as well. This is because of the laissez-faire economic development and public-private partnerships which do the majority of the planning processes in suburbia. Peter Rowe in Making a Middle Landscape, advocates for the involvement of design disciplines to become proponents in constructing a meaningful public realm in the exurban as the outdated interim uses are being redeveloped.[80] Kenneth Frampton also recognizes the importance of turning our attention to these denser exurbs, writing that there is a "pressing need to transform certain megapolitan types such as shopping malls, parking lots, and office parks into landscape built forms."[81] The rationale behind this approach lies in the fact that suburban density has not reached a critical limit like that found in traditional European Cities. Whereas in prototypical European city

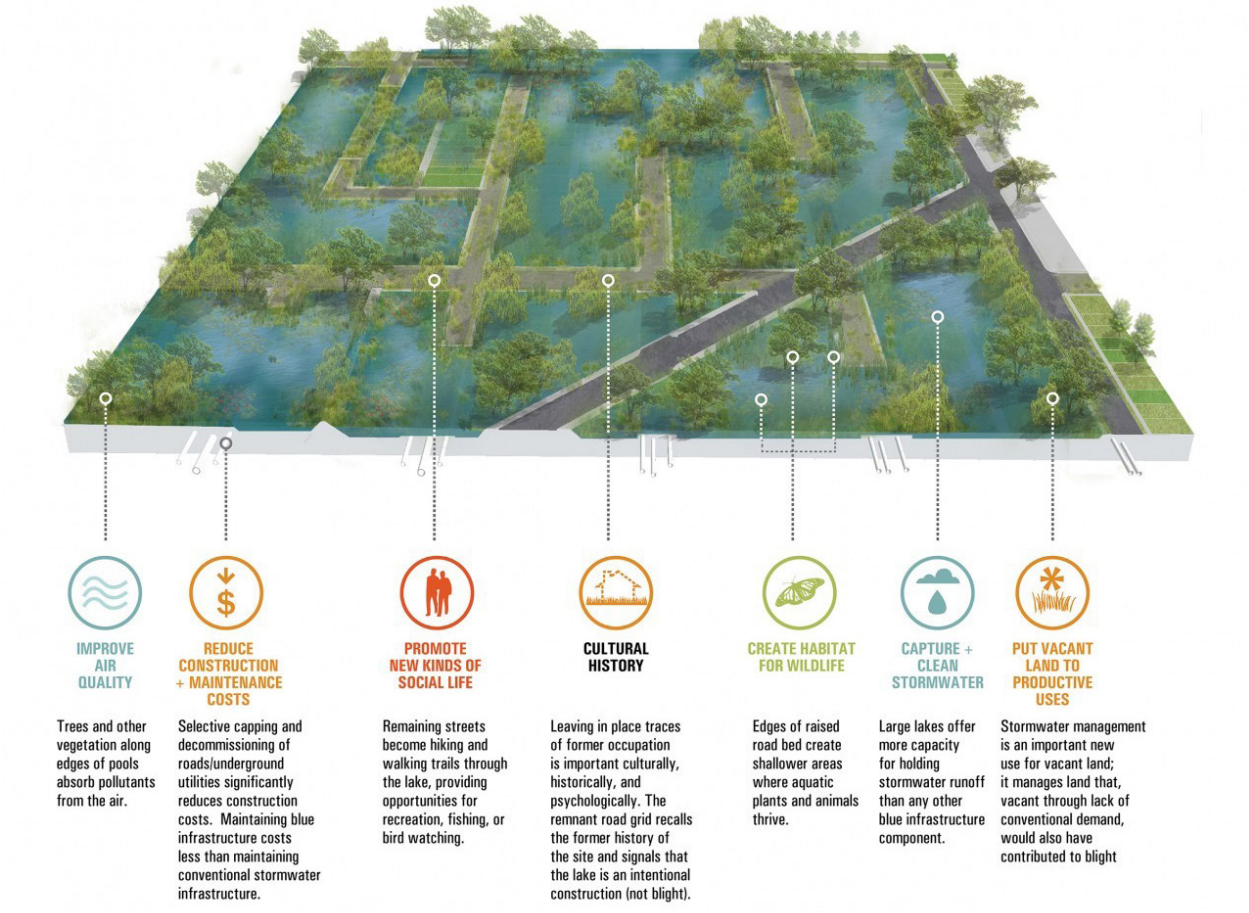

Figure 2.11 *Detroit Future City*. By Stoss LU. A diagram of flows and systems and how they function in a landscape.

models there is an urban density, centrality, and legibility of urban form that as arisen from hundreds to thousands of years of growth that met the demands of their society, be it waste disposal, fortification, commerce, and governance. Therefore, by using these pre-existing cities to model our own evolving cities does a disservice to the needs of our contemporary suburbanites who largely live in an environment that is far different from the dense built-out cities of Europe.

Unlike the transcendentalists who were inspired by a vision for a simple pastoral life, we have reached a critical point where our suburban landscapes can no longer be thought of as miniature versions of nature, but be considered as spaces that are able to match the needs of society through an integration of natural and manmade infrastructure.

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CHAPTER 3

Preface : Establishing a simple policy framework is key when addressing a complicated task such as curbing the rise of suburban poverty. But by looking at the makeup of newcomers, we justify that keeping the policy loose, but firm, it is possible to meet the varied demand of various population groups. To implement this extensive framework will require large enough suburban sites to support the required communal amenities for them to have substantial enough impact for its denizens. By customizing and designing the built environment to enhance activity to encourages capital and social equity, we can fill the gaps that would otherwise trap countless families in poverty and isolationism. By committing the substantial resources required for such social and environmental undertaking might seem daunting at first, but when calculating the cost of alleviating intergenerational and systemic poverty several decades down the road, the cost is minute.

Belonging

As more and more populations are shuffled around the globe, people are starting to change the way that they are relating to their environment. Large metropolitan areas have become increasingly complex and can be daunting for new immigrants seeking to integrate themselves into society. Ironically, has cities become globally linked their "highly diverse mix of residents can create a sense of isolation and disconnectedness,"[1] according to community developer, Andrea Gunraj. The large immigrant populations of a specific culture, race, and religion of the twentieth-century are becoming fewer and fewer as cities are becoming hyper-diverse. New immigrants can no longer count on social support from these settlement neighborhoods and therefore require other means to establish social networks. According to Robert Putnam, social networks in the creation of social capital where "the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness,"[2] can be established. The creation of social capital is vital to alleviate tensions that can arise between various populations. Additionally, in a 2006 study conducted by University of Calgary political scientist Brenda O'Neill, it was found that the creation of social capital has a direct link to a higher socio-economic status. Through her findings, O'Neill identified that education, especially higher education, is a key variable in determining a person's socio-economic status and will ultimately heavily influence their willingness to participate in civic discourse.[3] Higher education also provides additional benefits such as higher income, more free time, access to child care, and access to fields of employment that are tied to building political skills conducive to both civic engagement, leadership and respecting the democratic process.[4]

While it might seem initially seem obvious for large cities to absorb immigrants, this practice can actually lead to detrimental effects as demonstrated in the ghettos of Paris, Stockholm, Berlin, that resulted from large cities taking on far more immigrants than they are capable of caring for. This quickly leads to whole sections of a city succumbing to alienation and marginalization, and a bureaucracy that is unable to adeptly deal with each unique situation. On the contrary, it has been found in a study conducted by Yvonne Lai and Michaela Hynie, that "smaller cities may actually better foster social integration."[5] Smaller cities, such as Utica, New York, show that if social integration is handled on a smaller and individualized scale, immigrants are more likely to participate in the democratic process and feel as part of the urban and social fabric of the city rather than just another outsider. It must be cautioned, however, that if cities and neighborhoods, regardless of size, which possesses and promote a 'sanitized

and secured' urban fabric greatly inhibit the productive friction between people; something which is paramount to the active practice of democracy. By having an artificial and highly controlled form of 'public space,' in place of a 'true' public commons, then the deterioration of democratic integrity will ultimately give rise to tensions between the greater society and the disenfranchised.

Major & Minor Policy Considerations

Because policy and design are so closely intertwined it becomes vital to consider how initial policy changes can manifest themselves in the built environment. This is especially pertinent as nowadays landscape design strategies proceed traditional planning strategies,[6] and solving underlying issues through new lenses has become a widely accepted practice. Therefore, the following section will consist of a short series of paragraphs which will lay out a basic policy framework, one which can be explicitly transferred into the built environment. While the following taxonomy might seem obvious, or even banal, they are crucial in establishing an urban setting to facilitate an otherwise jarring immigration experience or an escape from intergeneration poverty for all suburbanites. These policies a simple framework. They serve as a jumping off point to address the changing needs of suburbia. This policy framework is largely geared to the most vulnerable population currently entering suburbia, but by providing necessary amenities for them, other established or soon-to-be established groups can directly benefit from this increase in social and physical infrastructure. By providing pro-immigrant infrastructure not only can the effects of poverty to be ameliorated for them, but also for a wide group of people that are otherwise invisible.

The Need for Density and Intensity

Looking at the dense urban fabric of inner cities can offer us clues as to which factors facilitate a successful social and economic climate. The first lesson we can distil from inner cities is not just their density that makes them successful, but the intensity and vibrancy that accompanies it. When immigrants reach their destination they often seek neighborhoods that provide affordable housing, economic opportunities and a preexisting network of migrants that share a similar country, region or culture that ease the transition into a foreign place. However, places that offer such amenities at affordable prices are becoming increasingly rare and as immigrants resort moving to suburbia, where hardly any amenities exist at all. Density plays a crucial role when it comes to entrepreneurial activity, as does access to public transit. Oftentimes affordable apartments are located at a considerable distance from employment zones and from each other. Saunders has found that

when these communities are distanced from one other, their inherent tendency to flourish in a vibrant economy and social networks[7] becomes severely limited. And although it might seem like an easy fix to simply add additional transit options (and stops), but without providing additional density and foot traffic, the lack of spontaneous economic activity will continue to hamper immigrant business ventures.

Business ventures are also deterred by the physical configuration of suburban apartments. These structures are symptomatically characterized by their empty corridors and blocked sightlines. This negates any sense of defensible space[1] thereby fostering "a perception of danger, deterring the social and commercial activity of residents, especially in women."[8] These empty and unmonitored spaces have subsequently become hotbeds for crime, assault, harassment and gang activity. This has been evident in projects that promoted Le Corbusier's vision for Towers in the Park. This model has now become infamous for inspiring modernist urban renewal projects such as Pruitt-Igoe, which have garnered international attention for its pervasive levels of poverty, crime, and segregation. This persistent threat of violence and vandalism discourages residents from improving their property and discouraging the formation of small businesses. An additional detrimental feature of the suburban apartment model is their all-rental scheme which gives provides no pathway to ownership, thereby deterring immigrants from improving, maintaining and becoming invested in their property.

Access to Ownership

Property ownership has historically been a linchpin for immigrants entering the middle class. Even to this day home ownership, to quote President Barack Obama from a 2013 speech in Phoenix, is "the most tangible cornerstone that lies at the heart of the American Dream, at the heart of middle-class life."[9] While some Americans might find the answer to the question 'what is the middle class without a house?' in the popular rental markets in Europe, owning a home, however, not only affords a self-deterministic use of the property but also provides a stable investment for capital – capital that not only increases in value, but can physical improve wellbeing (e.g. new windows do not only increase property value but reduce heat loss in winter). As in many cases, property which was purchased and improved by immigrants rapidly climbed in value. Saunders found that when this occurred in Toronto, the "gentrification of… classic 'ethnic' neighborhoods was mostly beneficial to formerly poor immigrants, who were able to participate in the housing value increase and

[1] see: Oscar Newman's Creating Defensible Space https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/def.pdf

use it to their advantage and their children's."[10] This is, however, no longer the prospect for the majority of today's immigrants who are finding themselves incapable of accessing property markets due to the ubiquitous rental-only paradigm or the exorbitant price of a single-family home. New pathways to ownership must be created. Rent-to-own, under better governmental oversight, could be a viable option. Additional funding structures can also be explored including flexible loan instruments, encouraging construction of affordable housing in suburban neighborhoods and increasing population in 'arrival-city' suburbs through lower-cost, high-density housing.

Access to Customizable Spaces

In addition to density and intensity, the option for migrants to customize their private property to include a variety of uses such as additional residential, commercial, light industrial and restaurant space not only provides multiple sources of income but has transformed whole streets as well. Saunders has documented that by customizing the ground floor, residential only streets have been transformed to include a multitude of uses and businesses. These uses are also not permanent and reflect the current needs and wants of the local community, thereby reflecting overarching trends in both space and time.

Despite the claims Everyday Urbanism, this spontaneous and organic transformation is far more difficult in a suburban setting where apartment and single-family houses lack either the physical space or proper permits (e.g. land-use & zoning) that are required to alter a space in any substantial way. Additionally, building permits and business licenses might be costly and hard come by – not to mention the difficulties of having to navigate in a foreign bureaucracy. And to reiterate, if a low-density foot traffic customer base remains street-level business without automobile ample access will continue to struggle.

Access to Transit Connections

As mentioned before, transit plays an incredibly important role for immigrants wishing to integrate rather than just settling. Allowing migrants to easily access urban centers makes it far more convenient to access social resources and removes barriers which would otherwise impede social ability. This is evident in the social impacts that an hour long, or more, transit journey can have. Detrimental effects can snowball from segregation to dramatically increased chances and duration of unemployment to crime. Additionally, it has been found that the children of parents who do manage to commute, despite poor transit connections, have to deal with limited support, educational resources, and reduced access cultural amenities.[11] These impacts are

worsened if a transit journey requires multiple unreliable transfers, where a single missed connection can lead to extensive delays. These factors can culminate in reduced second-generation integration and interrupt social mobility.

Access to Healthcare

New immigrant communities tend to rely heavy upon the public healthcare system. Therefore it is vital to understand how physical access can benefit the overall health of a community. Because of various backgrounds, scientific understanding, and resources, having access to basic health services which teach the fundamentals of disease prevention, public health standards, and nutrition, are invaluable to family stability. The physical location of healthcare services is vital when considering its importance to the greater community. There for the ramifications of policy, especially when involving transit access and connectivity, are incredibly pertinent not only for the health of the public as a whole but also when a city considers the long-term tax savings possible by accommodating established or incoming populations in the near future.

Access to Libraries

Despite it being the age of the Internet, public libraries have maintained their pertinence in society by becoming, what Saunders calls, "de facto centres of integration and inclusion."[12] Libraries are busier and more crucial than ever as they have become centers for acculturation - where immigrants can form social networks, receive free education, and can connect with public services. This includes teaching fundamental cultural and linguistic skills making it possible for immigrants to successfully integrate into a culture and language different from their own. Additionally, libraries allow access to computers which might otherwise be financially out of reach for new immigrants. Online access is vital when it comes to accessing governmental, filing taxes or finding social networks. Seattle's Central Library and Copenhagen's BIBLIOTEKET are prime examples of libraries forgoing their traditional roles of print media storage and instead emphasizing their main role as urban living rooms.

Access to Schools

As the gap in education level between native-born population and immigrants shrinks, social and cultural integration becomes increasingly attainable. A particularly pertinent example can be seen in Western Europe's immigration crisis where a 'second-generation decline' is occurring. Despite immigrant children being native-born, they have been unable to achieve the economic and social success of their parents. This is often driven by children, mostly

young males, leaving school prematurely due to the inflexibility of their educational intuitions. Saunders believe this is due to schools, "systematically sorting immigrant kids into vocational streams or ignoring their particular needs with teaching geared to a single, homogenous education level."[13] This has led to the current crisis in Western Europe where wave after wave of young men without education are falling into economic despair and often causing them to fall into a life of crime. This is, of course, prevalent in many of America's downtrodden minority communities where subpar education drives high dropout rate. For many trapped in this situation, the only pathways to success are through a career in professional sports or music, and for those who cannot achieve this, the only lucrative options left are also often illicit.

Britain and Germany have set up large-scale interventions in an attempt to reverse this cycle of decline. 'Magnet schools' have been established in impoverished immigrant neighborhoods and are able to provide students resources that are even beyond those found in middle-class neighborhoods. These schools aim to draw students from affluent neighborhoods in order to create a more diverse mix of students. Increasing the amount of educated youth in a lower-class neighborhood will ultimate impact the well-being of an entire city.

Access to Small Business

Immigrants have historically integrated exceptionally well through the forming of small businesses. This is evident in the 'classic immigrant neighborhoods' where various types of shops, markets, and restaurants make up the physical landscape of the neighborhood. Small businesses are more crucial than ever for the financial success for immigrants of the twenty-first century as stable blue-collar jobs are disappearing. However starting a small business, especially in a foreign country can be quite challenging and knowing how to obtain a commercial property lease, figuring out taxes, obtaining a business license and gaining other miscellaneous governmental permissions can be daunting. Strict health and building codes also unnecessarily stymie entrepreneurship, especially when starting a business in residential-only locations. Saunders writes that "many of the most successful immigrant-launched corporations of the twentieth century would never have made it off the ground under today's stringent licensing codes."[14]

Access to the Political System

The last, and perhaps most important thing for successful integration, is access to the political system. If immigrants are removed from the political process, a sense of alienation can follow, for it is a democratic right to have access to the politics which govern their very

own businesses, housing, public resources, and taxes. Being able to participate in politics, especially local politics can have dramatic effects on the feeling of acceptance and integration.

Affordability

In order to keep housing affordable basic rules of supply and demand must be heeded. Cities such as Houston, Phoenix, and Chicago have learned that by prodigiously approving build permits, housing prices can be kept affordable due to a predictable rate of new housing coming online. As a result, even relatively new housing (post-1990s) remains affordable in these cities. When compared to Seattle's average building stock (see figure 3.1), 56% of housing was built prior to 1970. This is not to defend the suburban sprawl created by this massive housing explosion in Sunbelt cities, but it is to persuade cities and governments to look at alternatives. Economist Edward Glaeser has argued that the only way cities can compete with sprawl is to redesign the way they think about affordable housing and focus on quicker commutes.[15] Glaeser states we should be skeptical of Jane Jacobs' antiquated notion that affordability can be achieved by preserving older, shorter structures.[16] While it may be true that an older housing stock in an undesirable area will have cheaper prices than new construction, this is the complete opposite case in a desirable area. This economic misunderstanding leads cities to

Age of Housing Stock

Over a quarter of the City's existing housing stock was built before 1940.

Year Built	Housing Units	Percentage
2010 or later	*About 16,000*	*5%*
2000-2009	47,861	15%
1990-1999	24,861	8%
1980-1989	23,566	7%
1970-1979	27,914	9%
1960-1969	28,424	9%
1950-1959	35,267	11%
1940-1949	29,441	9%
1939 or earlier	88,279	27%

Figure 3.1 Age of Seattle's Housing Stock.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013

preserve an old four storied building in favor of constructing a new 40 storied building in its stead, ensuring that only the most affluent will be able to afford property. And if the affluent or NIMBY class wants to keep old housing stock online, because it preserves the charm of their neighborhood, then the city must acknowledge that access to affordable housing will be more or less nonexistent in that neighborhood, effectively creating homogenous enclaves for the wealthy.

The density inherent to cities not only keeps environmental costs lower but also allows for the conglomeration of human capital. Cities that are in state of constant flux create friction by bringing together various groups of people. New ideas are spurred by the intersection of similar and dissimilar interests. However, by limiting expansion, which is otherwise required to incorporate any incoming population, cities

will ultimately stifle themselves. Paris, for example, was initially kept affordable through constant construction and renewal. The gutting of Paris by Haussmann, much like a devastating fire, allowed for growth and expansion allowing for more density as new technology allowed for safer and taller buildings. However, building restrictions such as in the Parisian neighborhoods of Montmartre – once renowned for its hospitality to starving artists such as Picasso, van Gogh, Brissaud, Degas, and many more – is now exclusive to all but the wealthiest of Parisians. This is a detriment to all the innovations and movements which could have been but instead were trapped by the stasis of past glory.

The Proof is in the Pudding

When density, intensity, ownership, customizable spaces, transit connections, healthcare, libraries, schools, small businesses, access to the political system, and affordability all come together they might initially sound like obvious urban qualities but are in fact necessary tools to combat the suburbanization of poverty. Cities, such as Utica, New York, have turned their stagnant economies around by welcoming and caring for incoming immigrant groups. Utica, once a downtrodden rustbelt town in Upstate New York, has started to once again become home to a thriving economy thanks to the large influx of immigrants. After decades of population decline, Utica has started growing again and has been able to retain smaller industries due to, as demographer Ellen Kraly explains, the large influx of highly motivated labor.[17] This has been facilitated in large part by the refugee center which helps rent apartments, furnishes them, turns on the utilities and starts teaching the basics of dwelling, such as locking the front door, turning on the thermostat, and how to work the stove and plumbing. However, accommodation and access to resources are just two aspects in avoiding the intergenerational poverty trap.

As poverty rates continue to climb in the suburbs it becomes imperative to recognize the specific benefits that an urban center provides for its less fortunate citizens, and which aspect of it can be successfully translated into a suburban environment. While some may argue that the persistent presence of the urban poor are indicative that resources and proximity alone are not the answer, it can be refuted the poor will always be drawn to the prospect of economic betterment that is often associated with cities. The existence of slums in cities across the world, such as in Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, and Chicago, show that even the most impoverished urbanites would rather live in overcrowded and dangerous conditions with the hopes that one day they will be able to achieve upward mobility; a possibility that is otherwise not available in rural conditions

Figure 3.2 Abandoned Mall in Akron Ohio.
Credit: Michael F. McElroy for The New York Times

often plagued by crippling poverty. As the globe continues to urbanize, it must be recognized that it is not droves of middle and upper-class families starting to urbanize, but people seeking an escape from poverty. Under this premise, we can assume poverty will always be present in cities. This brings us to the overarching issue. As the poor continue to seek affordable places close to metropolitan centers, we can predict a rapid rise in suburban poverty. But without providing vital urban amenities in these areas, the suburban poor will never have access to the tools to break out of intergenerational poverty by themselves.

Finding Space

When looking at our suburban fabric the sheer amount of sprawl becomes daunting and finding space for community amenities becomes a challenge. Small lots dominate much of suburbia and each is owned by a different individual, thereby making it difficult to either find a single parcel or assembling multiple adjacent parcels which are large enough to where intervention can have a meaningful impact. However, we are fortunate that capital is abandoning malls (see figure 3.2) and big box stores at an unprecedented rate.[II,III] The New York Times reports that across America dead malls are growing and vacancy rates within

[II] "Macy closes 100 Stores" http://money.cnn.com/2016/08/11/investing/macys-closes-100-stores/

[III] "Is Sears heading for the recycling bin?" http://www.cbsnews.com/news/is-sears-heading-for-the-recycling-bin/

them are raising at an alarming rate. Columnist Nelson Schwartz reports that "almost one-fifth of the nation's enclosed malls have vacancy rates considered troubling by real estate experts – 10% or greater. Over 3% of malls are considered to be dying – with 40% vacancies or higher [see figure 3.3], up from less than 1% in 2006."[18] Malls and big box stores are prolifically spread across the suburban geography, with their ample parking lots, these dead malls and big box stores could serve as the perfect locations for suburban intervention. Due to their moderate size (40 acres or larger), they are apt to become nodes that can link various suburbs through a transportation network, and due to their ubiquitous presence can be accessed larger population than compared with that of a single centralized core city.

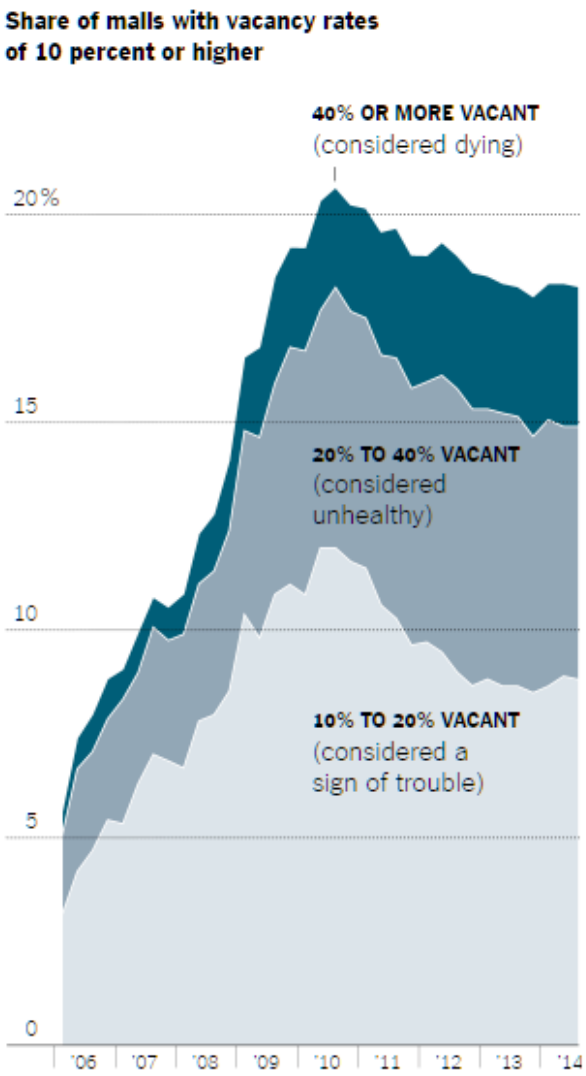

Figure 3.3 Vacancy rates in malls.
Source: New York Times

The New Urbanists have discovered the potentiality of these forlorn shopping centers of suburbia and have introduced their formulaic approach in converting the vast swaths of asphalt into self-described 'instant cities.' Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson, active members of the Congress for the New Urbanism and authors of Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs, push for a physical transformation in the reaches of America's suburbs. They see a rapid change of tearing down aging shopping malls and office parks and replacing them with mixed-use town centers akin to the urban models explored in previous decades. Dunham-Jones proposes an "agglomeration of suburban office and retail… interlaced with residences and walkable streets,"[19] with a new public transit network integrating this rapidly redeveloping portion of suburbia. This is accompanied with the conventional concept of Transit Oriented Design to replace any "archaic zoning ordinances with higher density, mixed-use development, especially near new transit

stations."[20] Dunham-Jones and Williamson write that high-density, mixed-use areas will attract a diverse crowd of young professionals, empty nesters, single parents families, and retirees who, up until now only have had two housing choices: a cramped urban apartment or an expensive suburban single family home. The authors argue that it has been forecasted that this demographic will comprise 85% of the new U.S. household population in the next quarter century and state that they will ultimately prefer a hybridized option of a semi-urban / semi-suburban lifestyle.

Dunham-Jones and Williamson admit that such New Urbanism projects lack the authenticity that is otherwise available to 'organic' slow growing, incremental urbanism. They also openly lament the fact that there is a naïve and pervasive democratic ideal and enthusiasm shared by professionals engaged in city making for incremental urbanism - who are convinced that it is necessary for cities to evolve over time.[21] The authors argue that the 'love of incremental urbanism' has been responsible for the criticism suffer by large New Urbanist projects, often mocked as being 'instant cities' and 'faux downtowns.' But they defend their position claiming that one should look past the matter of authenticity in order to combat climate change. The CNU argues that there such a massive amount of suburbia that needs to be retrofitted that the scale and speed that it needs to happen is "beyond the capacity of incremental urbanism."[22] Additionally, the CNU contends that incremental urbanism is unable to achieve an intervention on a large enough scale to have a meaningful impact on emissions and therefore merit the use of 'instant cities.'

Avoiding the argument that New Urbanism's proposal for construction on a massive instant scale will release a massive amount of carbon, all at once, sustainability can be far better achieved through educating residents, reducing the intrinsic costs of an import-only consumer lifestyle through local production, providing a meaning full public realm, and addressing the bland-scape that has trapped people in a vicious consumer cycle. And perhaps most importantly of all, we need to address the social consequences of neglecting the rise of poverty and social inequality in suburbia, something which New Urbanism is unable to address (a fact that is admitted by Dunham-Jones and Williamson).[23] Therefore, simply creating homogenous walkable enclaves, surrounded by a sea of impoverished, car-dependent suburbia, does little to curtail a city's impact on climate change.

However, the New Urbanists are correct in their claim that "large-scale projects are needed to achieve the critical mass necessary to induce behavioral change and evolution of the larger transportation, regulatory, and

market systems."[24] While small-scale organic urban growth may be the preferable route for established cities, it perhaps time to consider major interventions on sites larger than 40 acres; but instead focusing on matters of authenticity or market share, it is far more important to accept that a large enough suburban intervention is required if we are incorporate the rest of suburbia. Perhaps of focusing what humans can do for the built environment it is far more important to ask, and answer, what can the built environment can do for humans?

Charles Montgomery seeks to answer this question in his book Happy Cities. Montgomery starts out by exploring how - and if - total strangers can be made to like and trust each other and whether their interactions can be can be influenced by their immediate environment. When he asks New Yorkers if the minimum wage for people who work the night shift should be raised, the New Yorkers resoundingly replied: 'No, this is New York, tough out.' However, when Montgomery conducted an experiment that involved social interaction through the introduction of hot chocolate and hugging (as advised from prominent psychologists and neuroeconomist such as Paul Zak) the outcome was astonishing; complete strangers began to like and trust each other. When the question about the minimum wage was repeated, the answer was completely reversed and was overwhelmingly supported by an astonishing 90% now in favor. Montgomery goes further and explains that systems and forms in the built environment influence the way we feel and relate to each other, and that "the most powerful ingredients in human happiness are strong positive social connections."[25] Things such as roads, parks, sidewalks, varied, lively street edges and nature are all part of a city's 'emotional infrastructure,' and their quality and presence will ultimately impact the social equity of a city.

By directly increasing social equity and the connections that strangers share with one another, a city can be influenced, by their built environment, to think more altruistically and is willing to cooperate. Ultimately allowing us to focus together on global issues such as climate change, poverty, and social inequity. Montgomery claims that we cannot hope to solve our global issues if our society is isolated and indifferent to one other, stating, "There is a mountain of evidence to suggest that design, the way we design our cities, their systems, and their spaces and places have a strong effect how we respond and treat other people. Planners, architects, and developers need to take into account the emotional effect of the things they build."[26] If this can be realized then we can start to create cities that draw us together, cities that according to Montgomery, are "healthier, more resilient, happier, and wealthier."[27] Through

such intervention, we can make cities that bring out the best in us.

End Notes

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Image Credits

Figure 3.1 U.S. Census Bureau. "Age of Seattle's Housing Stock." Housing Affordability & Livability Agenda. *http://murray.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/All_BackgroundDataSlides_4Nov14-FINAL-Updated-6-26-2015.pdf*

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Figure 3.3 Schwartz, Nelson. "Mall Vacancy Rates." Digital image. The Economics (and Nostalgia) of Dead Malls. *http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/business/the-economics-and-nostalgia-of-dead-malls.html*

Chapter 4

Preface : Before jumping directly into the design, I found it vital to understand how commercial enterprises had evolved alongside their customers. As the suburbs became more and more fragmented the malls followed suit, ultimately turning all noncommercial uses into additional parking until they were surrounded by nothing more than an empty sea of asphalt. Since malls devolved into a consumerist monoculture, they were highly suspectable to be replaced by internet shopping. As explored in previous chapters, this has left us vast abandoned and underused spaces. As cities began to reimagine what these space can be used for we can examine and forecast societal trends, informing us of approiate design interventions - ones which reintroduce redundancy, pedestrianism connections, and community value back into places of commerce.

Figure 4.1 Satellite image of Shoreline
Source: Google

Site Introduction

The City of Shoreline (see figure 4.1) began its formal existence in the 1880s as railroad fever spread to the Pacific Northwest and US government opened the region to homesteading. The construction of the first major railroad station Shoreline in 1891 sparked the first major wave of growth (see figure 4.2), followed shortly by a second wave in 1906 when the Seattle-Everett Interurban trolley line was built. Shoreline was now set to follow the prototypical streetcar suburb expansion with commercial centers and around tight clusters of housing aggregated around interurban stops. However, in 1913 the paved North Trunk Road led to the proliferation of the automobile, which was introduced in the mid-1920s. Soon after the area halted its streetcar settlement development pattern and instead followed a typical automobile driven growth pattern where large tracts of land were subdivided in anticipation for future development. However, the anticipated development never arrived and thus houses, to this day, remain scattered throughout the suburban fabric. The impact of the automobile on Shoreline can also be seen in the two highways which bisect it.

The earliest constructed was Highway 99 which was built in the late 1920's. It served as the West Coast's main connection to Canada and Mexico (see figure 4.3). This highway encouraged propagated automobile ownership along its length due to the convenience and accessibility it offered. As the trolly line slowly faded into obsolescence, commercial development patterns turned towards the

Figure 4.2 Great Northern Railroad

Figure 4.3 Highway 99.

highway to capture the highly-mobile, car dependant, consumer base. By the early 1940's commercial development reflected the region's heavy north-south travel direction.

The housing boom that followed at the end of the Second World War drove major subdivision developments in Shoreline. Schools had to run double shifts due to the massive influx of families with young children.[1] In the late 1940s, after the region's density had reached a certain threshold, community leaders and residents alike began to unify Shoreline into a whole, despite it still being a loose and fractured series of neighborhoods. The name of 'Shoreline' actually did not come into existence until 1944 when an elementary school student described the school district, and community, that stretched along the shores of Puget Sound and Lake Washington. Shoreline has retained many of these post-war settlement patterns and is home to over 54,000 suburbanites.[2]

Current Land-use Patterns

Shoreline's predominant land use is single family R-6 (see figure 4.4) and has an average density of 2.7 units per acre. Located within this largely homogenous suburban fabric are pockets of zoning which provide for sparsely located neighborhood amenities such as churches, parks, schools, and campuses. As in the case of earlier suburban development, infrastructure was not required in 'unincorporated' land, resulting in many neighborhoods lacking even sidewalks. However, since Shoreline became incorporated into King County in 1995, there has been a substantial effort in improving transportation and infrastructure throughout the city. While growth has been rather minimal over the past 50 years, Puget Sound regions are now seeing a rapid growth in population. Up-zoning has been a popular tool to accommodate this incoming population and Shoreline has used it to encourage new mixed-use residential,

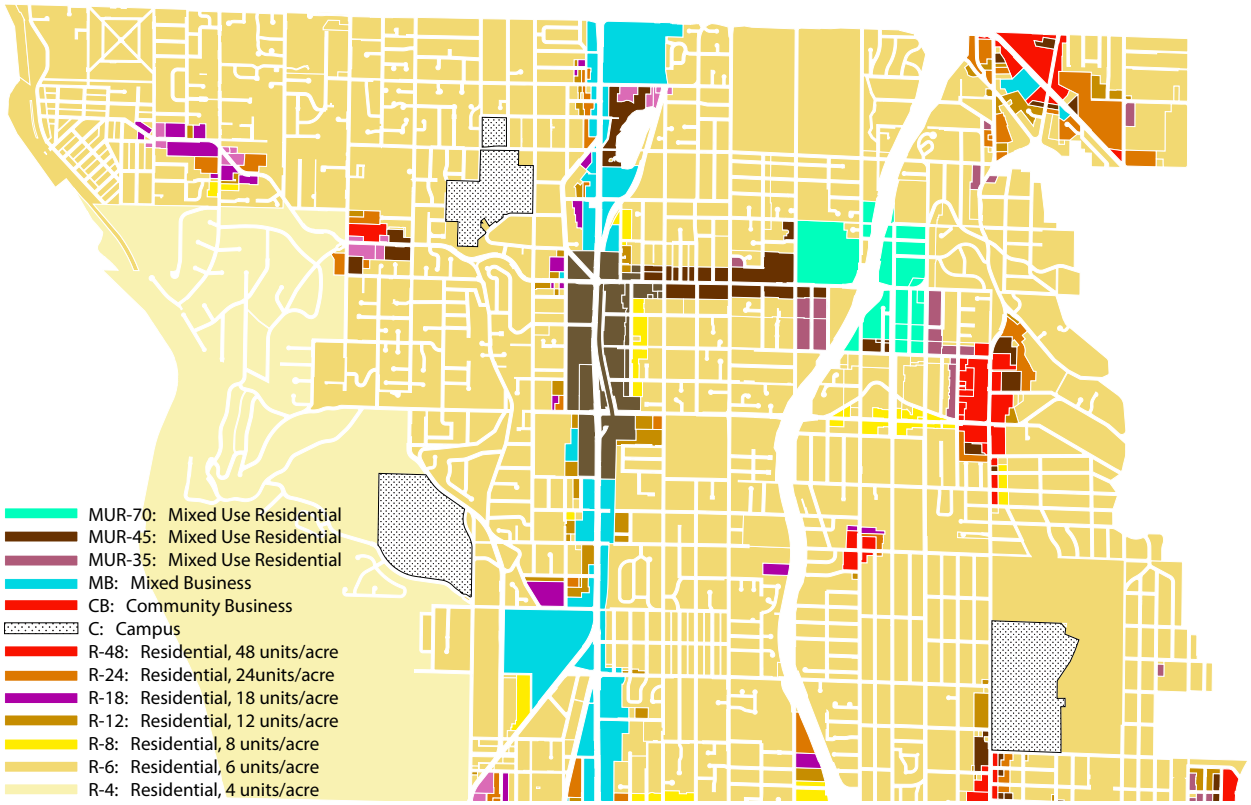


Figure 4.4 Zoning of Shoreline

commercial, office and retail construction along Aurora Avenue and in a northern stretch of I-5.

Evolution of Shopping Centers

Before delving too quickly into the site itself, it is worth a brief detour into the importance and evolution of shopping centers as they evolved alongside their customers. In addition to standard retail activities suburban shopping centers have once, according to Peter Rowe, "assumed the social roles of public gathering place and community centers."[3] The privatization of public space that we are all too familiar with today did not happen all at once, however. Commercial enterprises that followed early suburban growth established themselves along trolly lines and other heavily traveled roads to attract as many customers as possible. Stores soon became highly concentrated along major arteries and major competition naturally led them to be located in the most accessible and notable locations. Narrow store-frontage came as a result of retailer's knowledge that a high concentration of shops made for an overall increase in shopping activity and that the proximity to competitors actually boosted sales.[4] The developers of these early commercial strips initially considered them as an interim use only, their purpose was to generate enough profit to offset property taxes until

Figure 4.5 W.T. Grant Store of the 1950s. New Jersey.

eventually the property was worth developing into larger, durable, and more profitable urban uses. However, due to the ubiquitous spread of suburbs and their low density, many commercial strips never reached the critical point where redevelopment would be a profitable investment. Interim use frequently became permanent.

During the 1950's the proliferation of suburban sprawl and private automobiles caused shopping centers to evolve. No longer were shops directly flanking the street but instead chose to recede towards the back of the lot. Parking now became the most important factor in the ability to accommodate customers. Entrepreneurs started to prefer that their buildings take a U or L shape so the walking distance from the car to the building as short as possible (see figure 4.5). Rowe also extrapolated that "ratios on the order of 3:1 were employed for the amount of space to be left in front of a complex for car parking,"[5] to generate the most profit. Local character and charm, which stores used initially to attracted pedestrian customers, became obsolete - a cheap generic form was just as good for attracting the fast moving automobile driver. Their role as civic centers and public facilities also soon fell by the wayside as rising land costs made non-commercial land and architectural quality irrelevant in the race for capturing a greater market share.

Large shopping villages were introduced to areas with enough potential customers and available land. Initially, they sought to separate

Figure 4.6 Example of a Pedestrian Mall. Wonderland Mall in Livonia Michigan. 1962.

themselves from the pack by recreating a small town atmosphere where shoppers could stroll to and from individual stores. These forerunners to the pedestrian malls are described by Rowe as "consisting of blocks of shopping threaded through by picturesque pedestrian alleyways, surrounded by curb and lot parking."[6] Despite their rustic charm, even these shopping villages came into declined as their competitors, the pedestrian malls, were able to gain more market share, and profit, by vastly increasing the density of shops by filling in alleyways with shops and reducing pedestrian movement into a central exterior landscaped spine (see figure 4.6). Pedestrian malls soon were designed with an expansive roof, sheltering customers within from unpleasent weather conditions.

Shopping and Community

Within their suburban context, shopping centers were designed and constructed to serve as prominent spaces for social and civic life (on top of their profit motive). It had even been proposed that shopping centers "are not only a fundamental part of community life but vehicles of social reform as well."[7] Planners in the 1950s were already distressed by suburban sprawl that was sweeping the country. They saw an opportunity to tap into the popularity of shopping centers as a way to instill civic pride. Soon shopping mall designers, such as Victor Gruen, championed for a vision that held that the act of shopping was an instrumental part of the social life. Gruen himself quoted that "We can restore the lost sense of commitment

Figure 4.7 South Dale Center, 1956. The first enclosed shopping mall. Designed by Victor Gruen.
Courtesy: Life Magazine photo archive.

and belonging; we can counteract the phenomenon of alienation, isolation, and loneliness and achieve a sense of identification and participation."[8] Before long, nonretail amenities were incorporated for shoppers (see figure 4.7) and multitude of public events were held in malls, such as symphonies and public art, to capture a sense of community.

Despite this well-intention, malls and shopping centers have clear ownership rights, limiting it from becoming a truly public space. Although they are open to the public, many malls function like gated communities in the sense that they are selective in the activities and events that are able to take place. It is, therefore, amorphous in its role for the public. While shopping centers initially were able to integrate public uses within their retail structures, such as post offices, administrative offices, and libraries, the strong pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods that facilitated their uses deteriorated. According to Rowe, the drive to attract vehicular shoppers eventually became so economically influential that the monolithic parking lots of post-1950's malls ultimately severed malls from their adjacent neighborhoods.[9] Contemporary strategies to deal with these enormous parking lots is to embed individual buildings within them. Despite this new movement of the 'lifestyle mall,' the public realm still suffers due to the undefined and vacuous empty space that exists between these individual structures - absent of any sense of place. Shoreline presents an

Figure 4.8 Location Map.

opportunity to circumvent this contemporary trend of converting defunct space into middle-class boutique shopping islands and by instead focusing on the future needs of the of suburbia.

Site Context

Aurora Square is located directly between two urban centers, Seattle and Everett (see figure 4.8), and lies on the highly trafficked Aurora Avenue (see figure 4.9). Its 1960s suburban automobile-dependant context was the prerogative for real estate developers to blanket the site in a seemly incomprehensible amount of asphalt and little has changed on the site since the inception of the Sears in 1967 (see figure 4.10). As consumer trends have shifted dramatically over the past decade, big box stores are floundering, replaced by the convenience of internet shopping. While the internet largely provides access to cheap products of mass production, there is a certain return to craftsmanship and human touch happening driving the return of farmers markets and 'mom and pop' shops.

The City of Shoreline has noticed this decline and is attempting to generate additional tax revenue from the under-performing sites such Aurora Square where the acres of asphalt could be used much more lucrative purpose (see figure 4.11). To remedy this the city has deemed Aurora Square as a 'community renewal area,'[I]

[I] for more information see: http://www.cityofshoreline.com/business/aurora-square-community-renewal-area

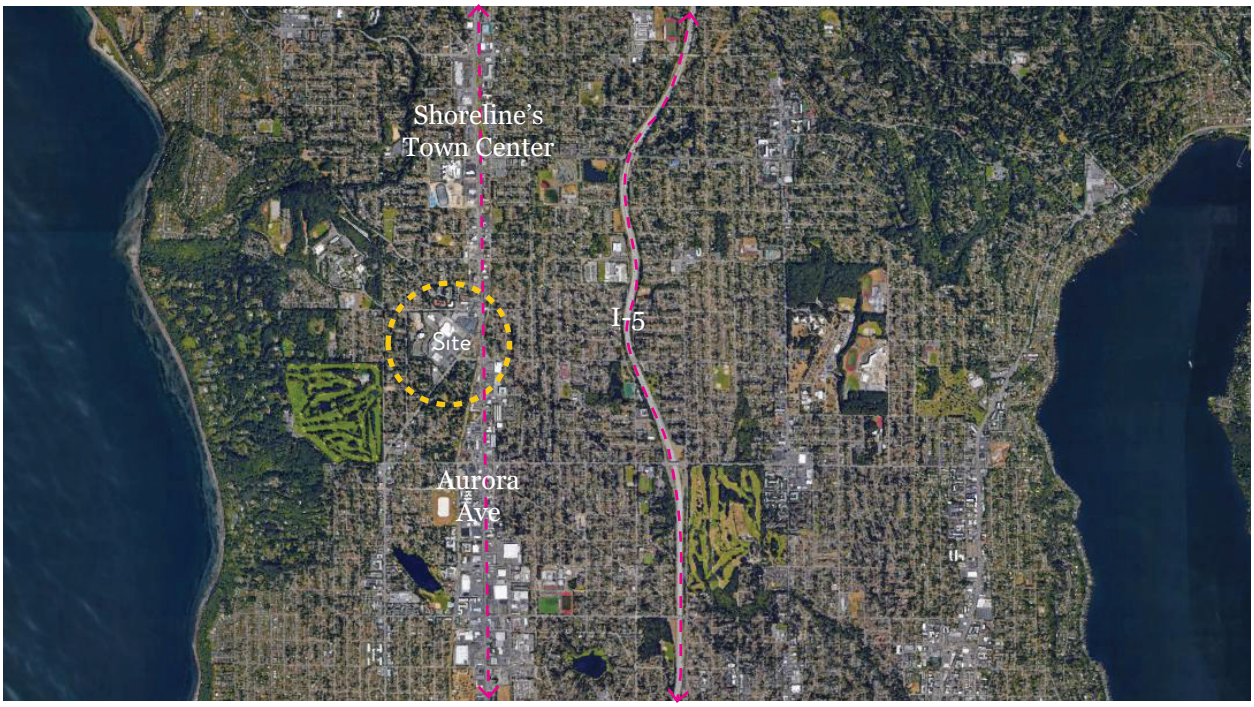


Figure 4.9 Location of Aurora Square

Figure 4.10 Sear's opening day in Shoreline, Washington. 1967.
Courtesy of: Shoreline Area News

Figure 4.11 Aerial View of Aurora Square.
Courtesy of: Google Earth

to generate community and business activity through innovative master planning solutions. The atmosphere envisioned by Shoreline evokes a potent, albeit nostalgic image, and reads:

Imagine an open, green plaza in the center of Shoreline, filled with sun-bathing and studying students, young families watching their children run and play, an elderly couple enjoying a Central Market picnic, dogs wagging their tails, actors practicing their lines, and the sound of college-age buskers singing with an occasional clink as coins fall into a hat. This is the back-drop to the busy comings and goings of shoppers and lunching workers who relish the time of their day that allows them to visit the renewed Aurora Square shopping center. It is a "one-stop" convenience shopping solution that provides dining, nightlife, and healthy-lifestyle options. It is a community gathering place, where a leg-stretching walk easily turns into a serendipitous rendezvous with friends. It is an environmentally sensitive district within walking distance of Metro's Rapid Ride bus service and the Interurban Trail: the intersection of life, study, entertainment, sustainability and retail.[10]

While this vision does sound appealing, the master plan generated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (2015) proposes little more than to promote the contemporary trend of using the 'lifestyle mall' typology to shuttle down buildings and nestle them into the preexisting, nondescript, sea of parking (see figures 4.12 & 4.13). While the city proposes sourcing additional tax revenue from high-end boutiques and catering towards an upper-middle-class clientele, this plan does little to resolve social inequality or incorporating community infrastructure so dearly lacking in its nearby context.

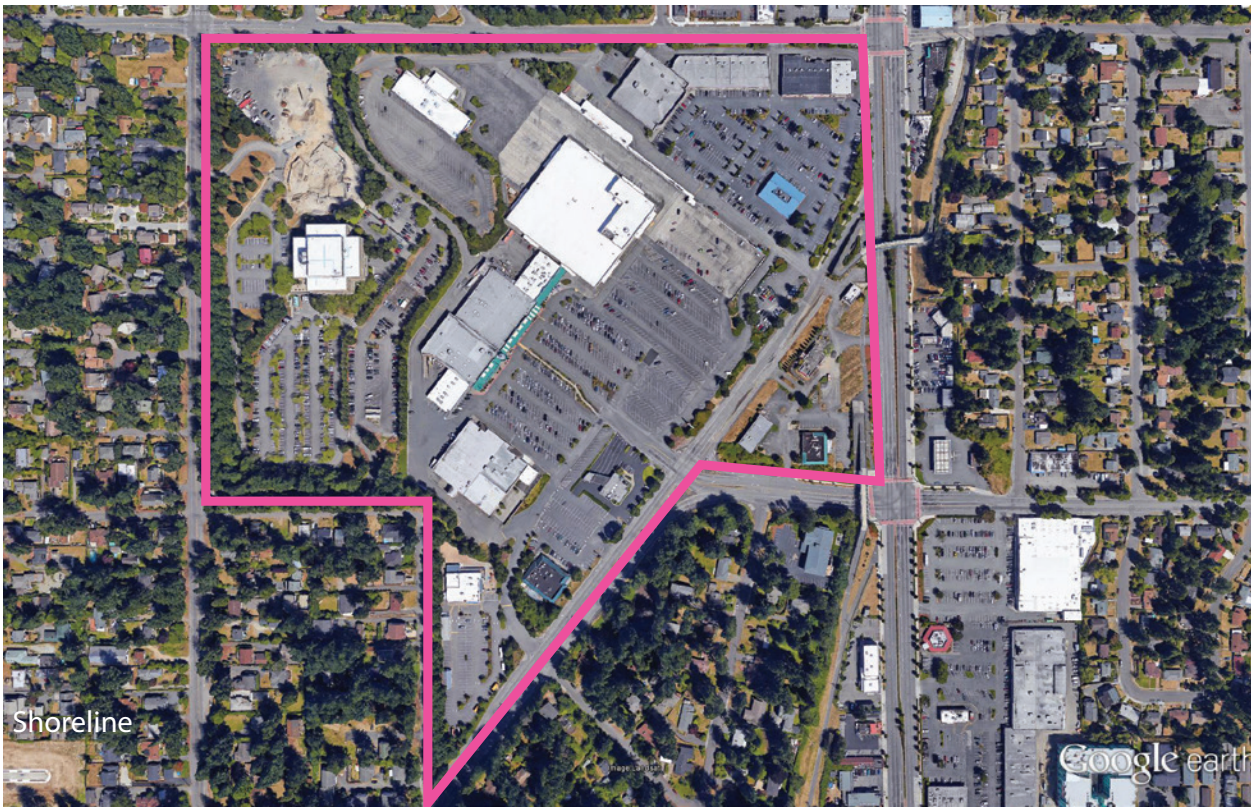


Figure 4.12 Before
Courtesy of: Google Earth

Figure 4.13 and After.
Source: FEIS Proposal from the City of Shoreline

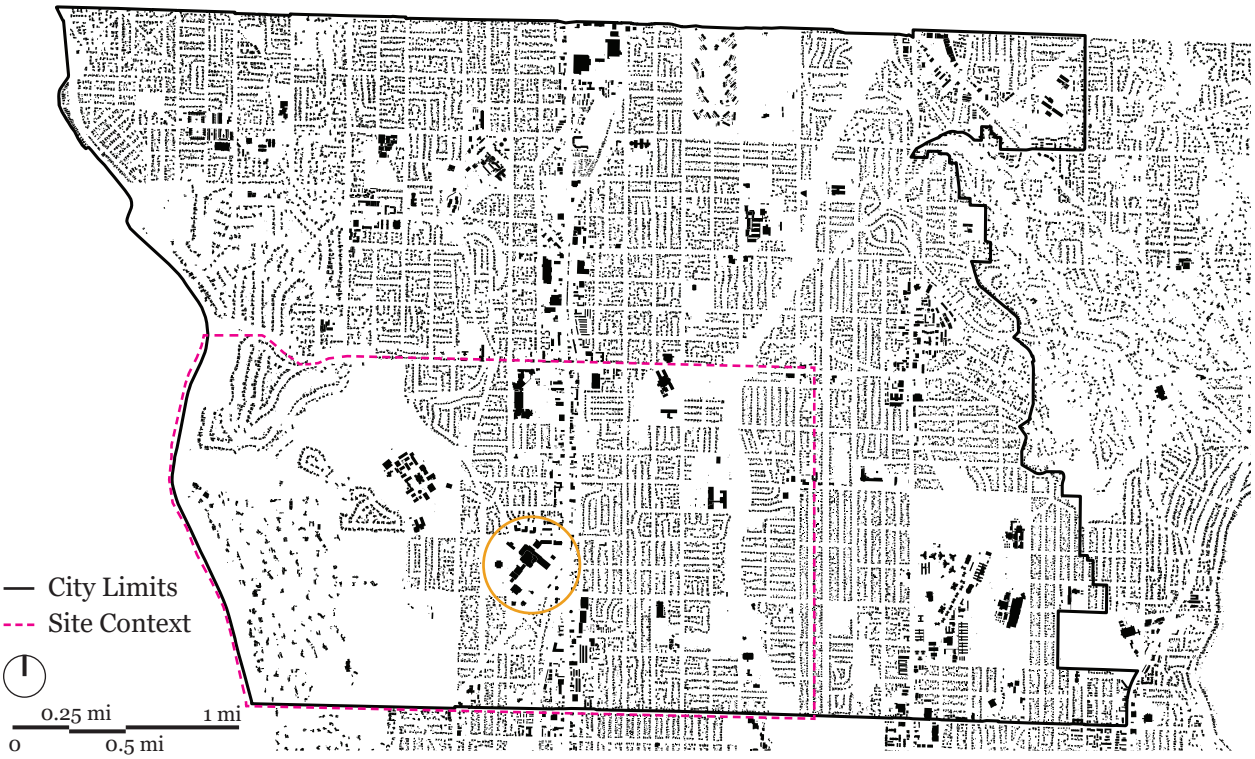


Figure 4.14 Shoreline's Figure Ground.

Aurora Square's immense size and tabula rasa quality can allow the site to have a much greater impact on Shoreline's current, and future, residents than what the city has proposed. As the Puget Sound area continues its incredible population growth (with over one million additional people forecasted in the next 25 years, according to the Puget Sound Regional Council),[11] Shoreline's prime location will undoubtedly attract a large number newcomers looking to work or continuing to work in the nearby urban centers. As explored in previous chapters, these newcomers will not be flush with wealth, as the city has priced them out, and cultural, community, and educational facilities will be necessary to build social capital and increase equity. To illustrate why Shoreline is unable to provide the social amenities we first need to analyze the multiple figure-grounds that make up Aurora Square's context (figure 4.14).

The first refined figure ground (figure 4.15) reveals the staggering amount of uninspiring sprawling suburbs that surround the site. The second refined figure ground (figure 4.16) shows how Aurora Avenue the previously mentioned commercial activity has aggregated along its length and how Aurora Square juts out into its suburban context. Figure 4.17 shows the nearby educational and campus institutions. Although hidden behind a dense forest, Shoreline Community College lies directly behind Aurora

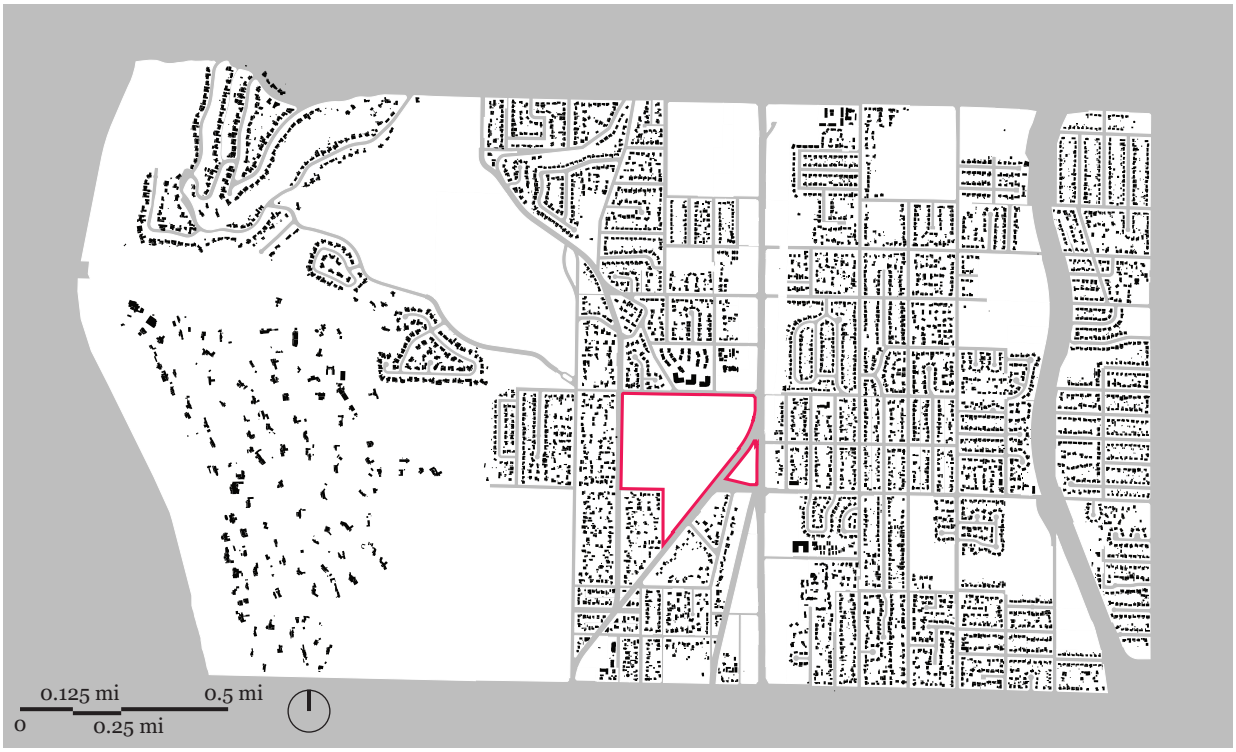


Figure 4.15 Residential Figure Ground

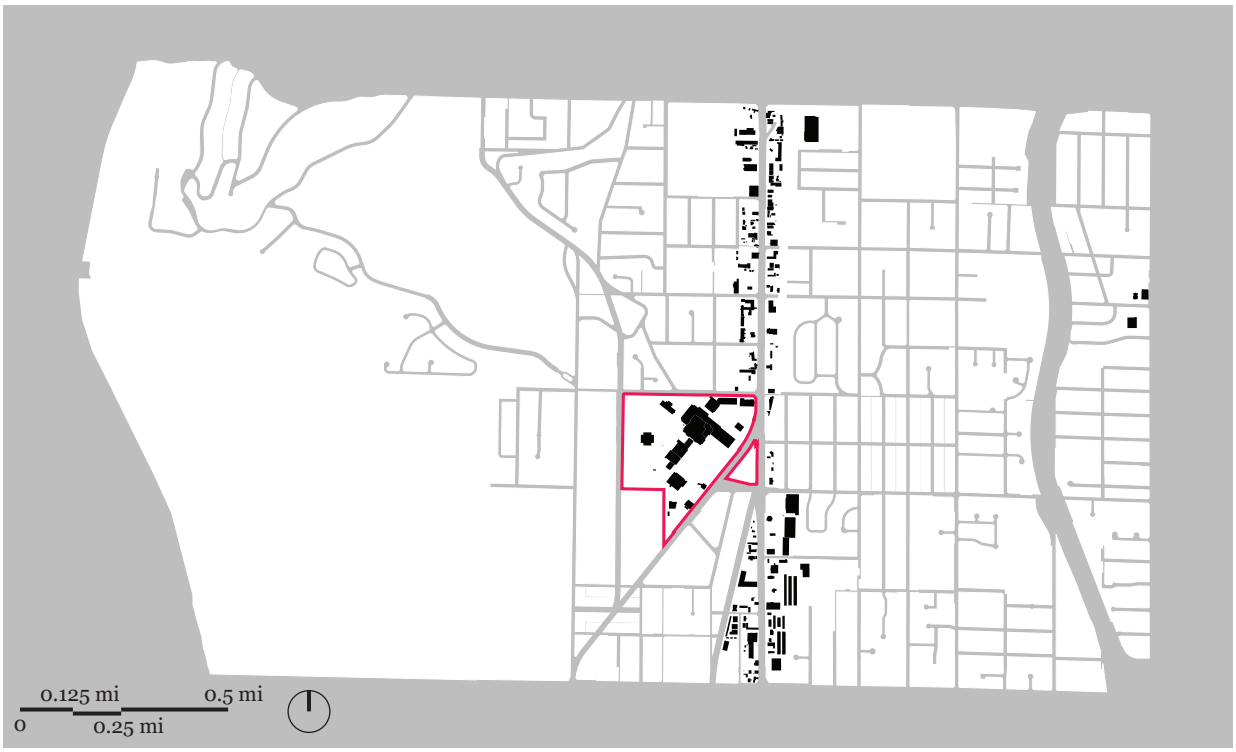


Figure 4.16 Commercial/Retail Figure Ground

Figure 4.17 Campus/Educational Figure Ground

Square and could be tapped into to enhance the accessibility to educational facilities. Despite this initial boon, when examining the rest of the immediate context, the lack of all other community and social amenities becomes painfully obvious (see figures 4.18 & 4.19). The last bit of site context to analyze is how much publicly accessible green space there is, revealed in figure 4.20. At first, the large green space located towards the southwest seems like an amenity, but upon further inspection, this large parcel of land turns out to be a private golf course, one that is inaccessible to the general public. Towards the northwest, a little more than one mile away from the center of the site, there are several sports fields (two baseball fields, six tennis courts, one soccer field and an off-lease dog park) and the heavily-forested Boeing Creek Park. Finally, the 24-mile long Interurban Trail which connects central Everett to Fremont, intersects the site in the eastern triangle, offering a convenient access node for those entering or exiting the site by bike or on foot.

When all of these various site context analyses have coalesced into one, a basic argument emerges of how the site can be augmented to provide the basic social and community infrastructure (both manmade and natural) Shoreline so sorely needs.

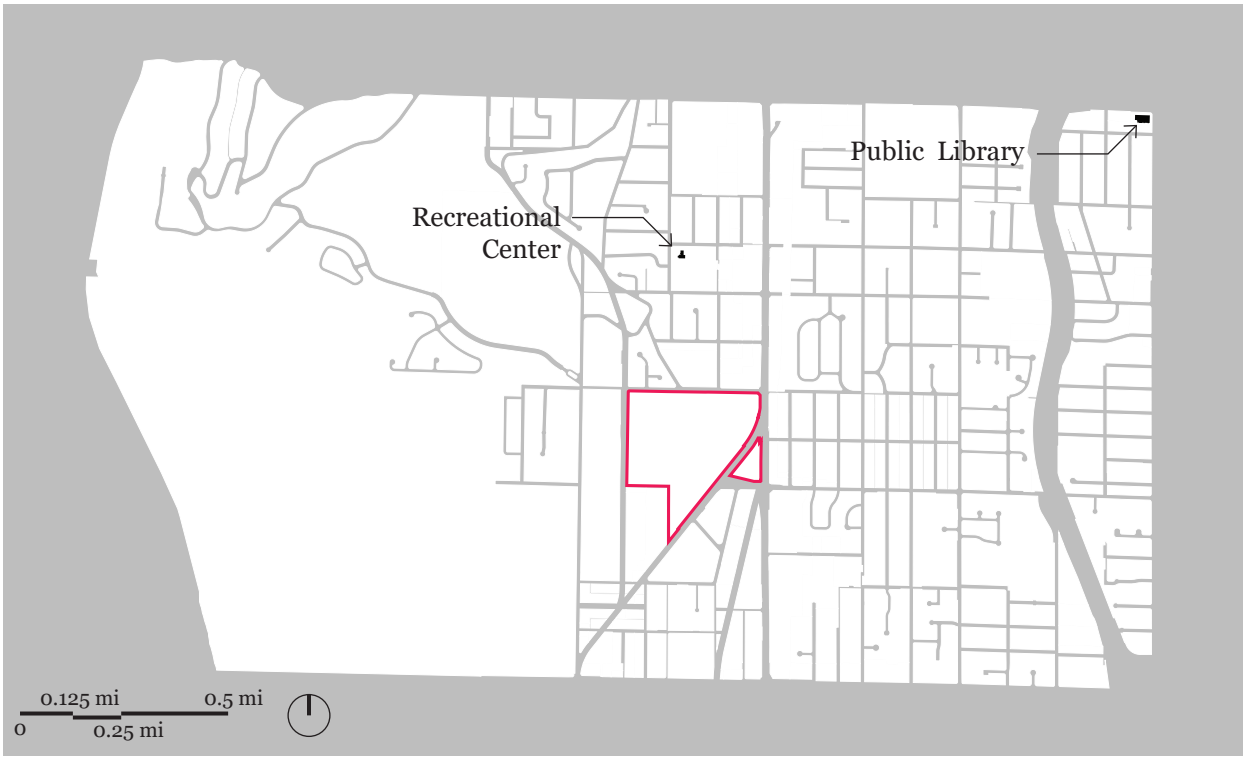


Figure 4.18 Public Amenities

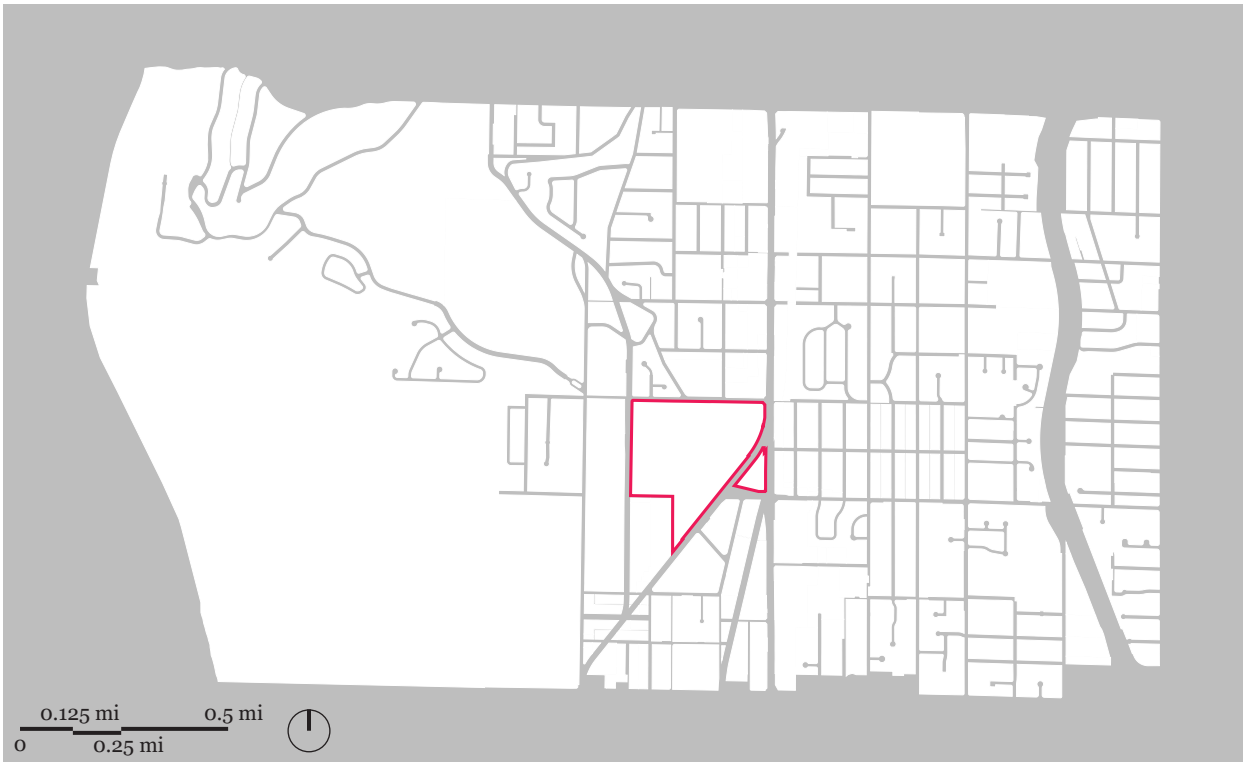


Figure 4.19 Community Centers

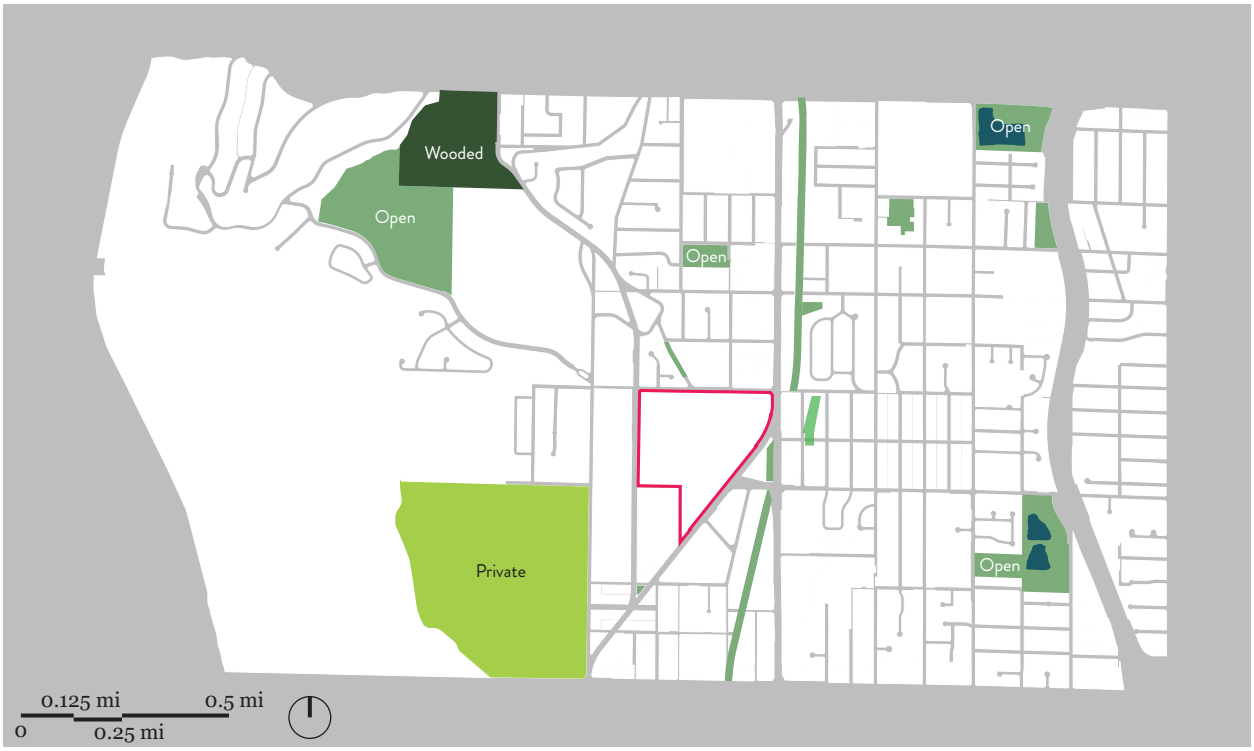


Figure 4.20 Green Space

Site Diagrams

Topography

Zooming in closer on the site brings its topography into focus (see figure 4.21). At first glance, nothing seems out of the ordinary, but upon further inspection, the extents of the excavation work which terraced the site is revealed (see figure 4.22). These terraces were created to accommodate a mass of car-dependant suburbanites and reduce the gradient of the site for their convenience. This decreased the complexity of development needed for the site and was able to focus activity around designated commercial spaces by framing them with 20-foot high barriers.

Hydrology

While this has not shifted the hydrological processes on a large scale, it has, however, impacted them dramatically on the site scale. Aurora Square, which lies south in the Boeing Creek Watershed (see figure 4.23), historically had a creek which it drained into, but after development towards the north, the creek is now channeled underground. What remains intact is the two low points on the site prone to flooding (see figure 4.24). Not only does the stormwater from the site itself flow to these low points, but stormwater from a considerable stretch of Aurora Avenue (both north and south) and much of the southerly Boeing Creek Watershed flow here too.

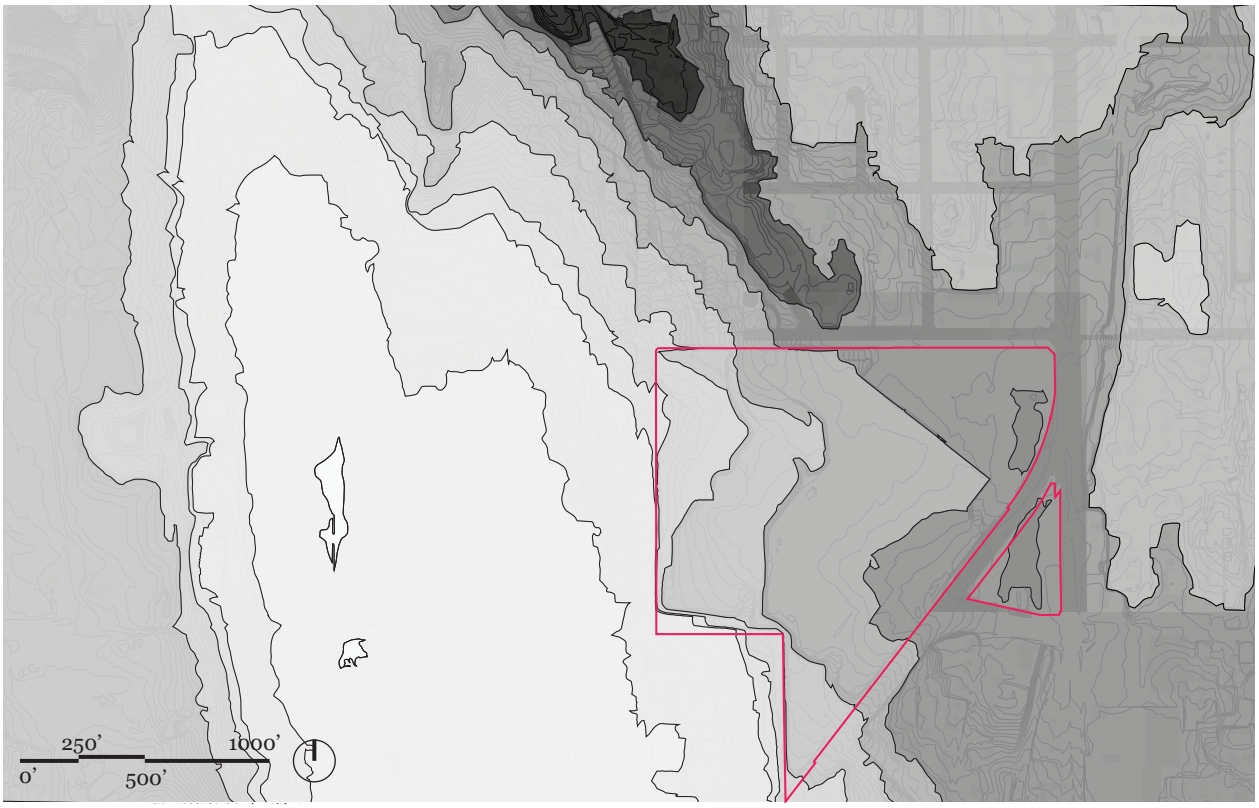


Figure 4.21 20’ Contours

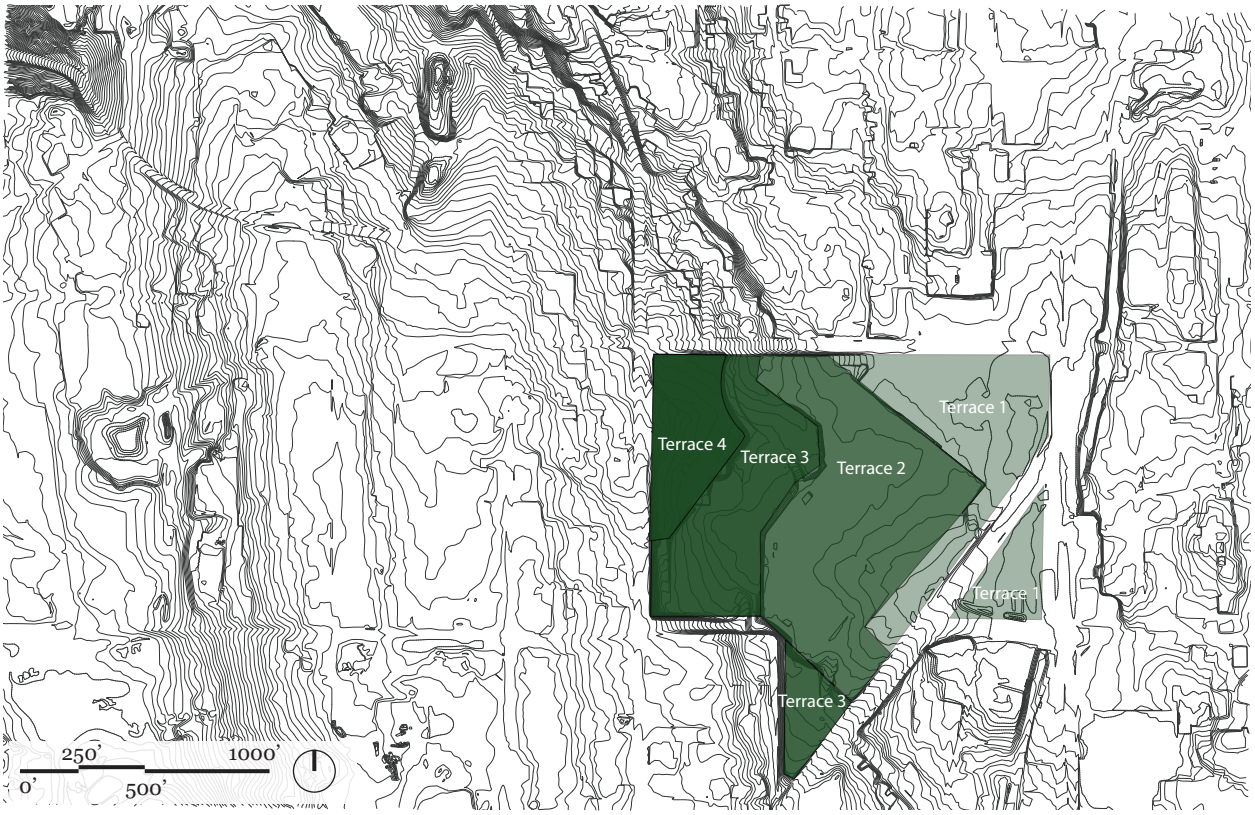


Figure 4.22 Terracing - 2’ Contours

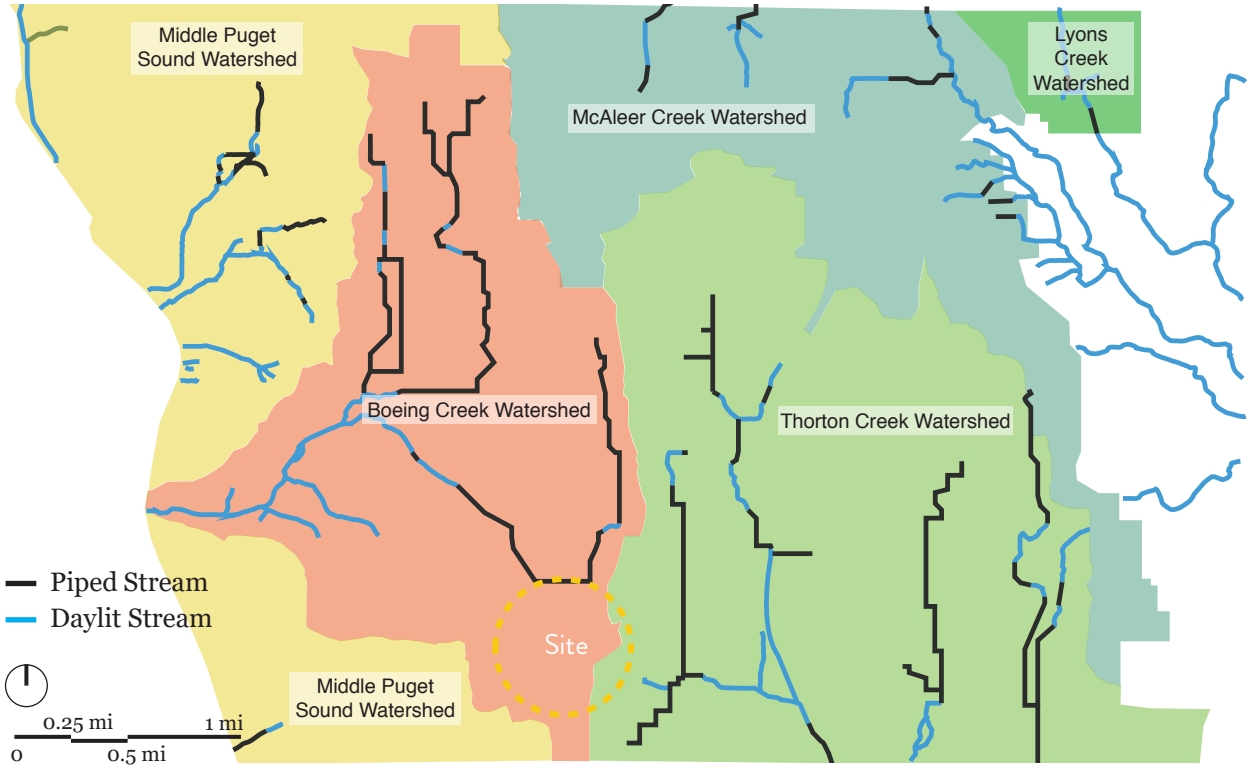


Figure 4.23 Shoreline's Watersheds

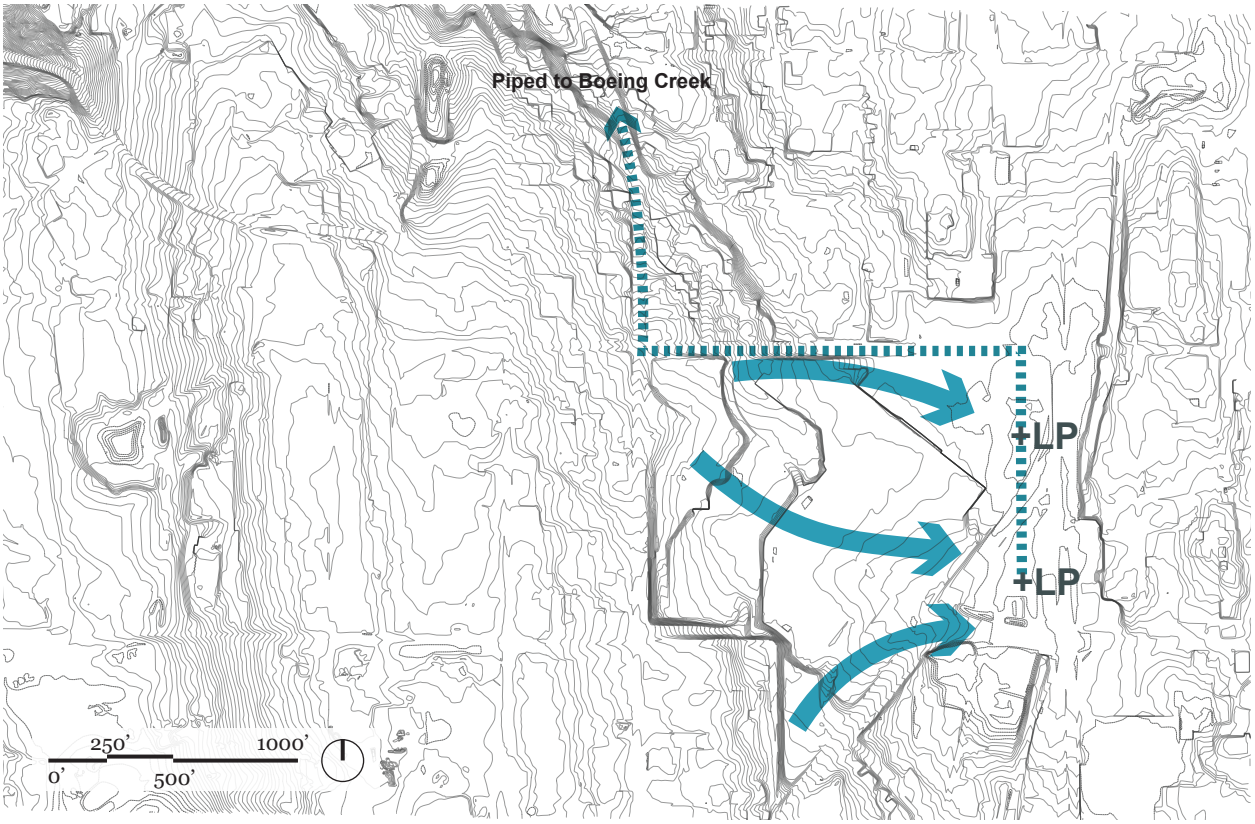


Figure 4.24 Hydrological Forces - 2' Contours

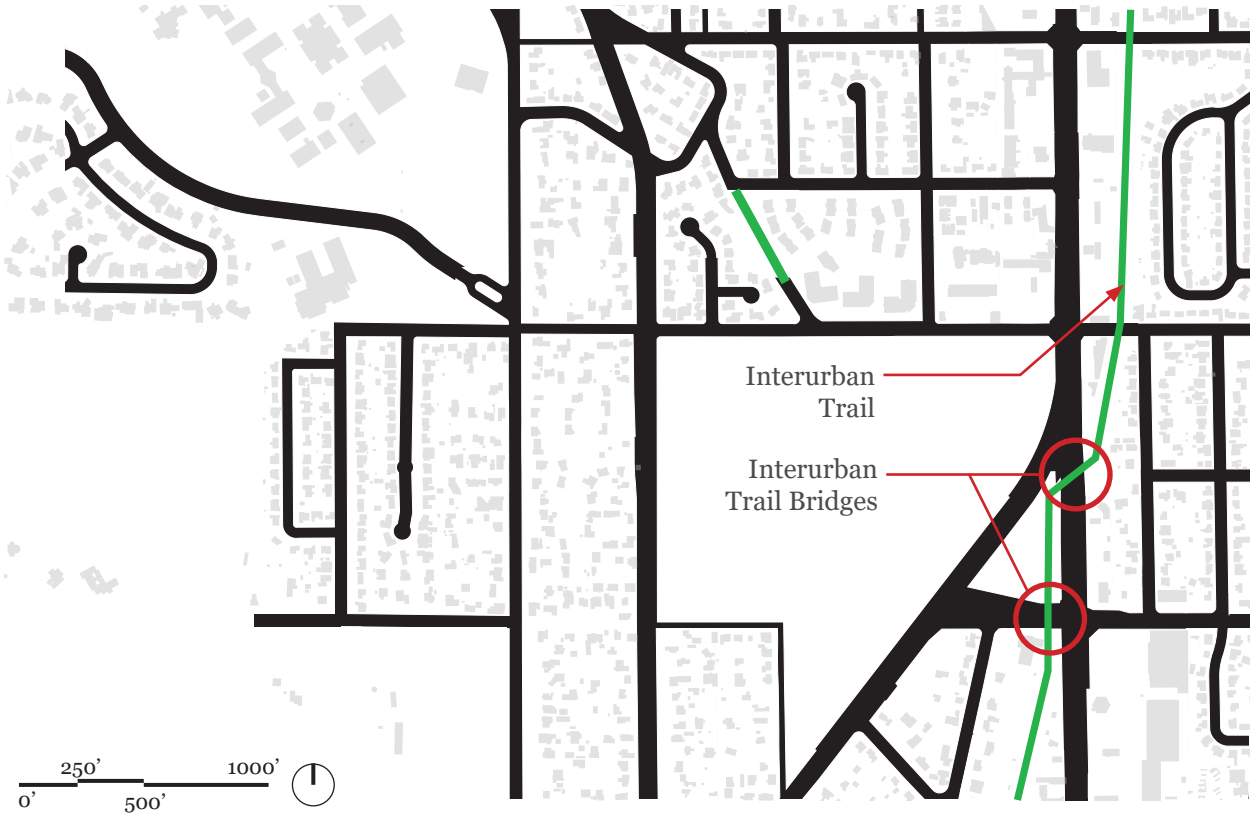


Figure 4.25 Suburban Network

Figure 4.26 Existing Bus Routes

Figure 4.27 New Bus Transfer Station

Local and Regional Connections

The terracing of the site has also cut off its connection to its westerly and southerly suburban neighbors - as grade changes occur suddenly, dropping up to 40 feet in some places. This separation is clearly visible when looking at the street grid that runs along the site's perimeter (see figure 4.26). While there are entrances to the site, all of them funnel directly into its expansive sea of parking. The site happens to lie directly between local and regional bus routes (see figure 4.26). Connecting local and regional public transportation, in a pedestrian-friendly manner, would encourage an increase in use and mobility; especially for those who commute to Shoreline Community College by regional bus connections.

New Bus Transfer Station

While Aurora Square does have access to a handful of north-south bus routes, its ability to access other regions needs to be expanded. The triangular lot along Aurora Avenue is large enough to incorporate a bus transfer station that would truly make this a public transportation hub. By linking Shoreline Community College, the Interurban Trail, Aurora Avenue, Westminster Way, and N 155th Street (see figure 4.27) in one singular location, bus transportation could be transformed into

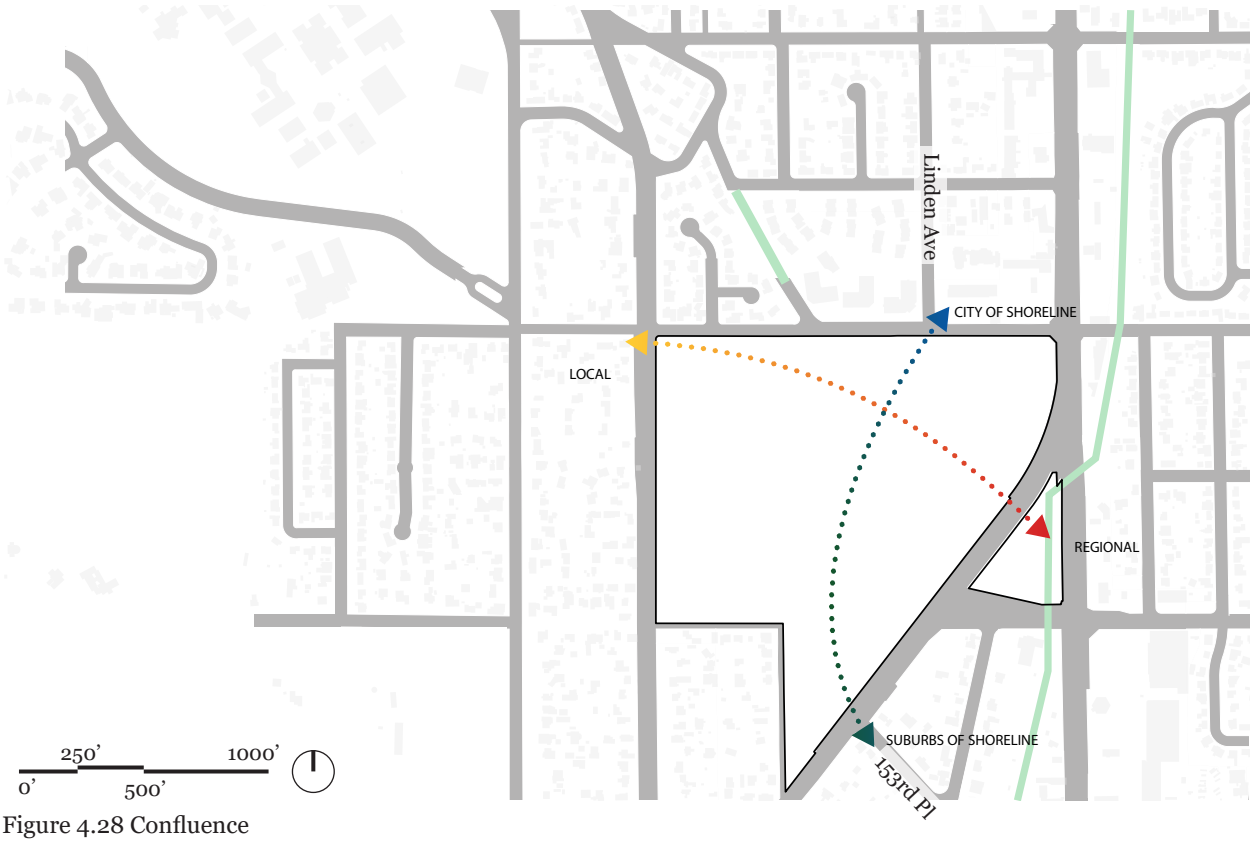


Figure 4.28 Confluence

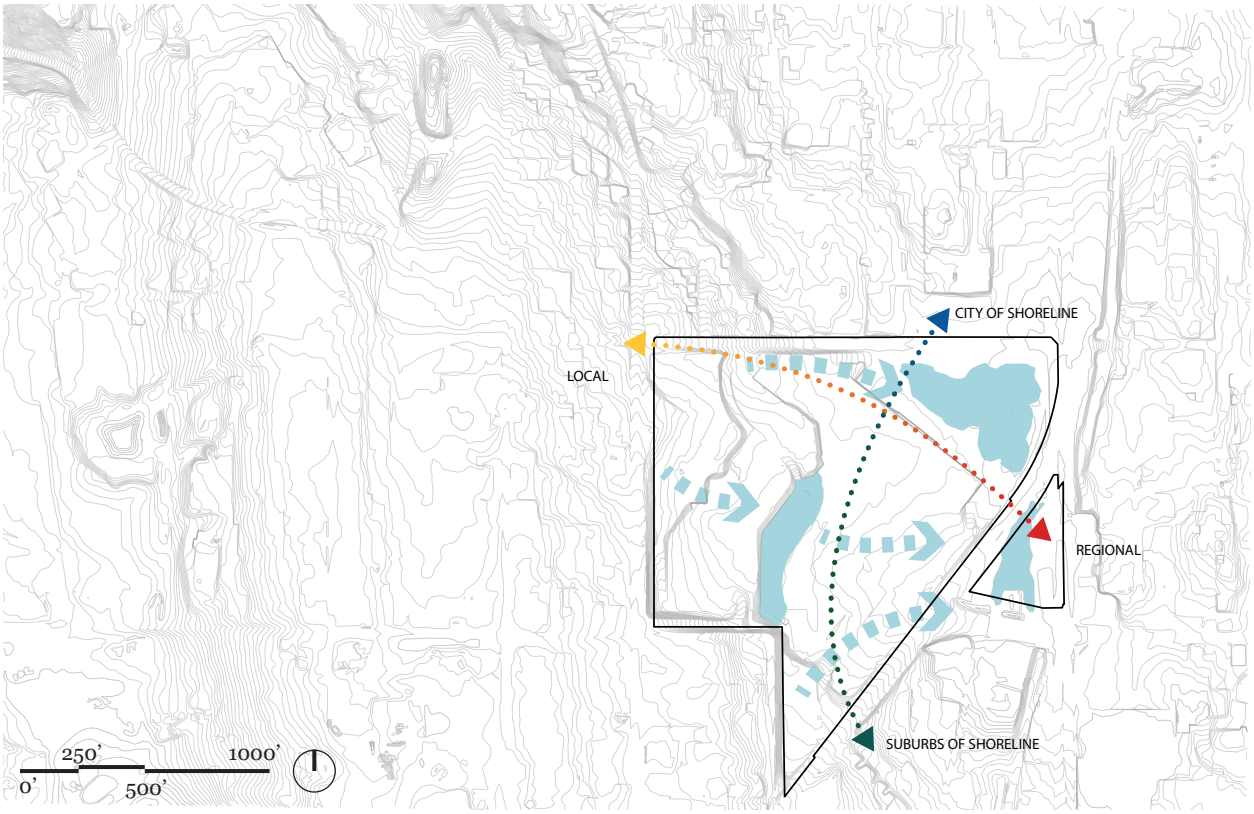


Figure 4.29 Movement

the preferred choice of transportation for residents and non-residents alike. This would be a cost-effective means to curb the reliance on private vehicles to commute to and from nearby urban centers and access desirable locations around the region.

Confluence

These promising connections begin to inform a movement pattern confluence. Not only do local and regional transportation systems beget these patterns, but so do the two suburban streets, Linden Ave and 153rd Pl, which currently dead-end into the site (see figure 4.28). Stitching these streets together could start to reintegrate the site back into its context and provide a more pleasant alternative route for pedestrians making their way to Shoreline's City Center (located 1.5 miles to the north). By this line of reasoning, the creation of two routes that pass through this, in two different manners, can be established.

Movement

These paths would run through two very different topographies (see figure 4.29). The east/west path climbs steadily 60 feet in elevation over its 1800 foot course. The north/south path, on the other hand, remains relatively flat throughout (except for the notable hills near the entrances.) This not only influences human movement but water's as well. It is, therefore, pertinent to examine how the north/south path is intersected perpendicularly by storm water, which tends to accumulate in the north and middle of the site. The east/west path experiences a more linear and constant flow of stormwater due to its relatively consistent gradient. This suggests two very different material matrixes and porosities for these paths that are predicated upon their human and stormwater movement.

Landscape Corridors

The various coalescing forces suggest the creation of two very different landscape corridors along these paths (see figure 4.30). The east/west corridor would take on the role of facilitating a higher rate and intensity of pedestrian movement aided by hardscape, which could also serve to channel and direct stormwater. Whereas the north/south corridor would allow for a more natural setting, adopting on a park or greenbelt environment, offering a large public green space, able to provide animal habitat and stormwater infiltration. In essence, a promenade and green spine.

Community Amenities

With these distinct landscape corridors and relevant programmatic proximity, community amenities can be sensibly placed according to their most pertinent adjacencies (see figure 4.31). For example, student services and dorms

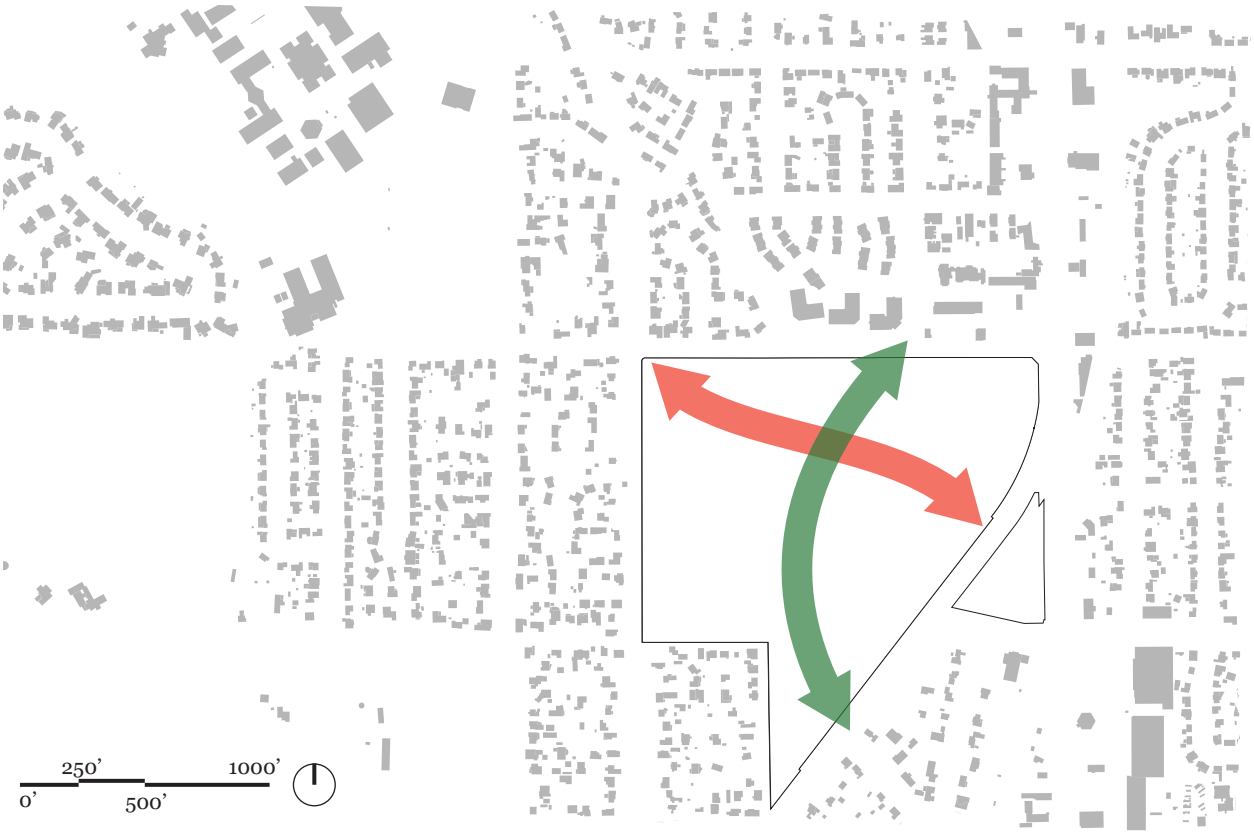


Figure 4.30 Landscape Corridors

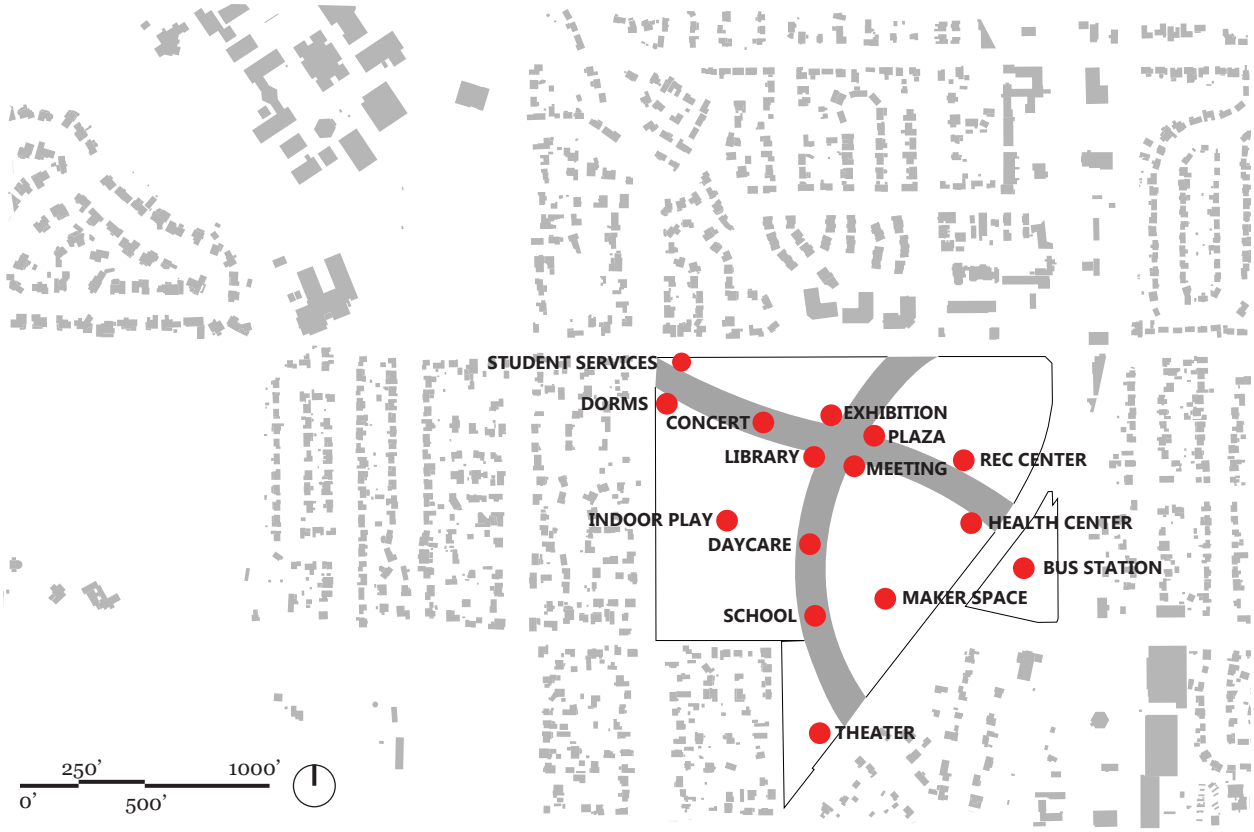


Figure 4.31 Community Amenities

Figure 4.32 Zones

would benefit most from being located closely to Shoreline Community College. Healthcare and recreational centers would take advantage of being close to a regional transit center and in a noticeable location. Educational facilities would benefit from a quieter natural setting where play and environmental learning could go hand in hand.

Zones

The landscape corridors also carve out six zones, each with distinct characteristics (see figure 4.32). The zones towards the west continue the smaller scale residential pattern set up by the adjacent suburbs. Zones towards Aurora Avenue continue the commercial zoning and merit a taller perimeter of buildings able to block vehicular noise. However, although the northeast zone is located on the corner of Aurora Ave and N 160th st, its shaped is determined by the hydrological forces acting upon it; therefore lending itself to become a natural setting for phytoremediation, infiltration, and serving as a juxtaposition to the monotony of the asphalt of Aurora Avenue. The zones towards the north and south provide a chance to introduce cultural and community amenities which are conveniently accessible to the adjacent suburbs.

Figure 4.33 Pedestrian Connections

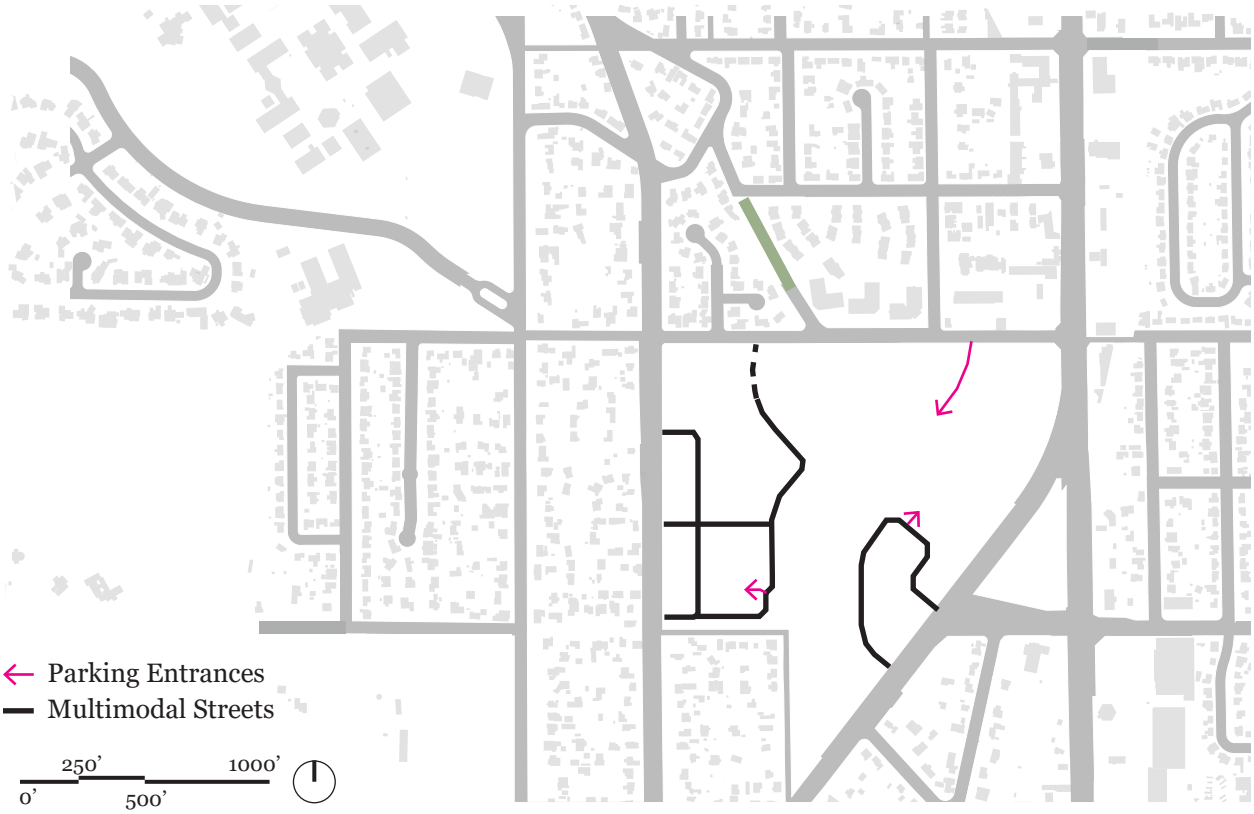


Figure 4.34 Automobile Access

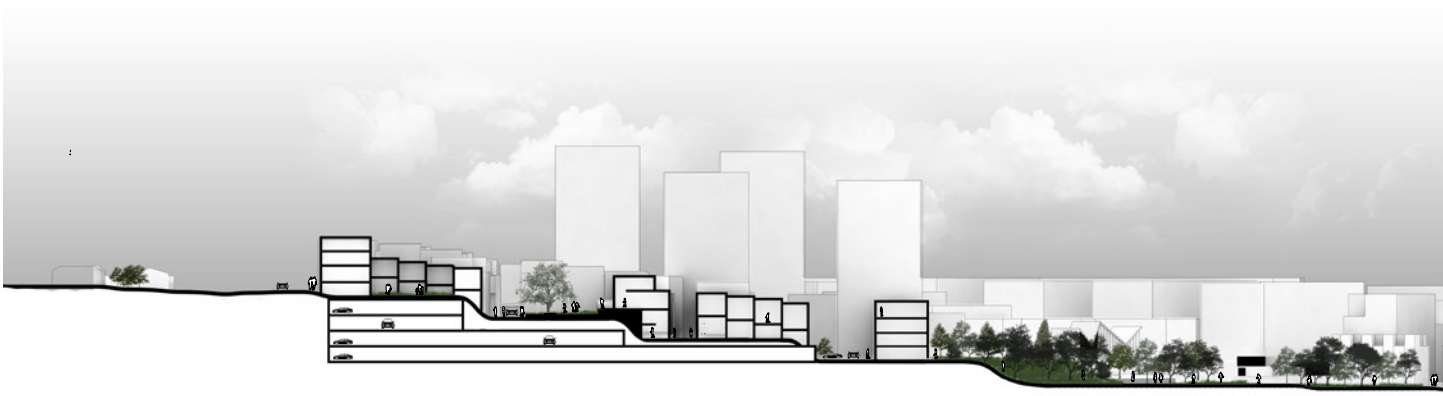
Figure 4.35 Activity and Density

Connections

To break up the zones a network of small-scale pedestrian corridors could be threaded throughout the site (see figure 4.33). These would connect various zones as well as promote walkability/bike-ability. By efficiently linking residential units to commercial, community, public spaces, and transit infrastructure, reliance on automobiles could be almost eliminated. Automobiles are still able to enter the site, however, and access buildings to provide vital functions such as delivery of goods, picking-up waste, and allowing emergency services, etc. However, there are no thoroughfares thereby removing the otherwise unnecessary vehicular traffic that would impede pedestrian movement and ecological systems (see figure 4.34). Additionally, private vehicles are relegated to underground parking facilities, allowing for many streets shed their unnecessary width to accommodate street parking. This affords housing to be closer together, streets to be sufficiently activated with pedestrians instead of cars, and conversely granting more space for public use by aggregating street parking into meaning public space.

Activity and Density

Commercial activity is concentrated along highly trafficked zones to enhance economic



viability, increase vibrancy, improve the perception of public safety (by increasing the presence of people), provide wayfinding, and instill a sense of public/private space without relying exclusively on fencing or barricades (see figure 4.35). Density also aids in this manner by working off of existing notions that denser and taller areas have inherently more exterior space dedicated to the public realm. This pushes activity along the landscape corridors where visibility, density, mixed-use, and community spaces are located to emphasize active, democratic space. This space, which is not private or solely intended for commercial purposes, allows all types and manners of people to gather and access a highly dynamic and visible public realm.

Site Design

After this initial foray, an overarching strategy to reconnect this site back into its context emerges. However, there is a crucial aspect of density that needs to be addressed. Because of its locality, determining the appropriate density for this suburban site is imperative. Current zoning codes encourage sprawl by enforcing setbacks between housing. However, if these setbacks were to be removed, and aggregated instead to a nearby place, they could be transformed into meaningful public space (see figure 4.36). This practice is quite common and has led to the creation of the clustered housing found in many walkable cities and neighborhoods around the world.

Many cities and neighborhood were studied for their pleasant urban fabric created by their density, height, variation, and streets grid. This included a host of famous places such as Beacon Hill, Boston; Kyoto, Japan; Copenhagen, Denmark; Venice, Italy; Barcelona, Spain; Portland, Oregon; and Greenwich Village, New York. However, the underlying premise for these places is that they are located in (or are) large urban centers and can, therefore, sustain a complex public transportation system and merit a homogenous density that is otherwise incompatible with a

Figure 4.39 Site Section

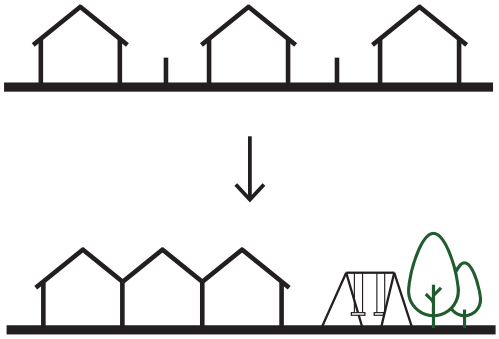


Figure 4.36 Space Aggregation

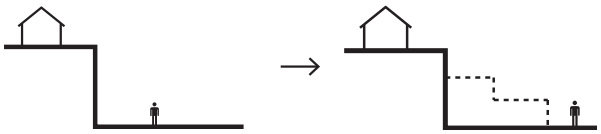


Figure 4.37 Terracing

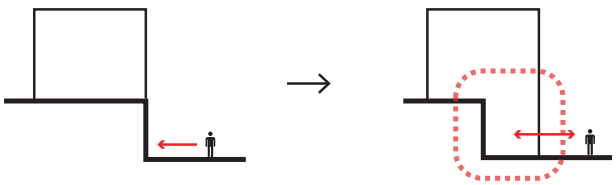


Figure 4.38 Pedestrian Engagement

suburban infrastructure and geography.

Much of Shoreline currently has a density of six units per acre but is attempting to increase density along Aurora Avenue by zoning for Mixed-Use Residential - 45-foot height limit (MUR-45) providing a drastic increase to 48 units per acre. This creates an even bigger rift as more people are exposed to the lack of public space and infrastructure in suburbia. Thus the challenge became to see if there was a more hospitable way to blend varied high-density zoning with community amenities without relying on the sterile, and homogenous, 5-over-1's, that are plaguing much of the Pacific Northwest. It was therefore deemed the most appropriate strategy to apply a prototypical Vancouver BC urban model; one where towers are blended in with shorter residential/commercial units, resulting in an average unit per acre density of about 30 and a more pleasant pedestrian experience. This allows strategy also had several other aspects going for it, allowing for the use of wide unit

variety, multiple ownership structures, and access to an array of different types of public/ community spaces.

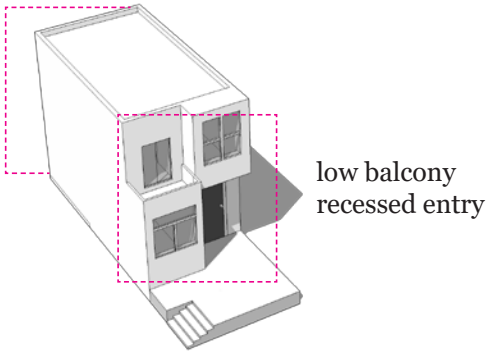
The site was then planned to be partially terraced in order to bring it back to grade with its suburban neighbors (see figure 4.37). These terraces allowed for the creation of underground parking where their height was used to organize and allow for basement units, reduce the height of retaining walls, and reduce the perceived amount of stairs. Housing was also situated to open up to the public realm instead of being isolated up high (see figure 4.38). This allowed for the creation of a new unit type (shown on page 114) to avoided ground floor privacy issues.

With all of these design considerations a section was rendered that possessed these various qualities, ultimately inspiring the design of the site plan (see figure 4.39). This site plan was organized around a complex organization of the 'individual building' scale, the 'urban space created between the buildings' scale, and then 'overall hydrological scheme' scale (see figure 4.40). The following diagrams and figures will explain how the individual components can be aggregated into something greater and vice versa (see figures 4.41-4.49)

Figure 4.40 Site Plan


n 160th st
plaza
flood plain
confluence
world entry
promenade
green spine
bus stop
activity central
connector
aurora ave n
westminster way n
n 155th st

Compact House (figure 4.41)



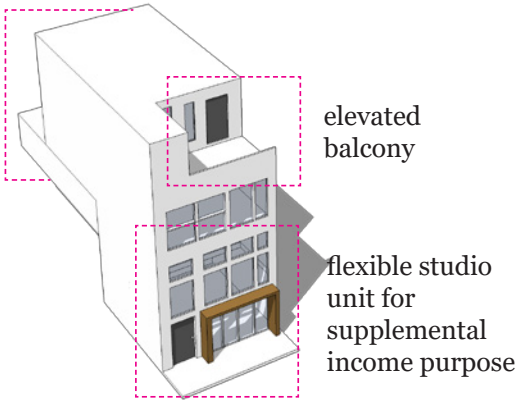
Location: Residential Zone. Attached to courtyard housing, terraces along the stairways of the 'old world entries.'

Description: Affordable starter home.

Size: 1400 sq ft - 2 BR 1 BA

Height: 18 feet

Flex Unit House (figure 4.42)



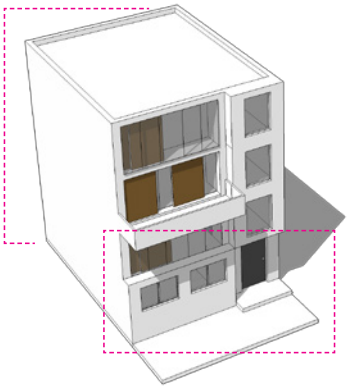
Location: Residential Zone. Attached to courtyard housing or community terraces. Lower unit access pedestrian or multimodal streets.

Description: 2 unit dwelling. One unit has access to courtyard/terrace. The other unit is a flex unit and can be configured to be office/workshop/restaurant/MIL loft/ rental for the main upper unit.

Size: 677 sq ft - Studio
1150 sq ft - 1 BR 1 BA

Height: 38 feet

The London (figure 4.43)



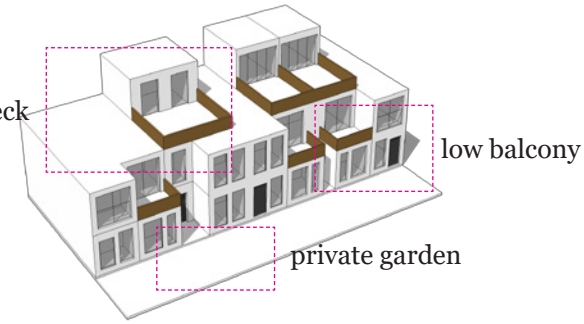
Location: Residential Zone. Attached to courtyard housing and faces wide multimodal streets only.

Description: 2 unit dwelling with shared access. Lower unit is a granny flat, upper unit is a townhouse.

Size: 750 sq ft - 1 BR 1 BA Flat
2800 sq ft - 3 BR 2 BA

Height: 38 feet

Shifting Row (figure 4.44)



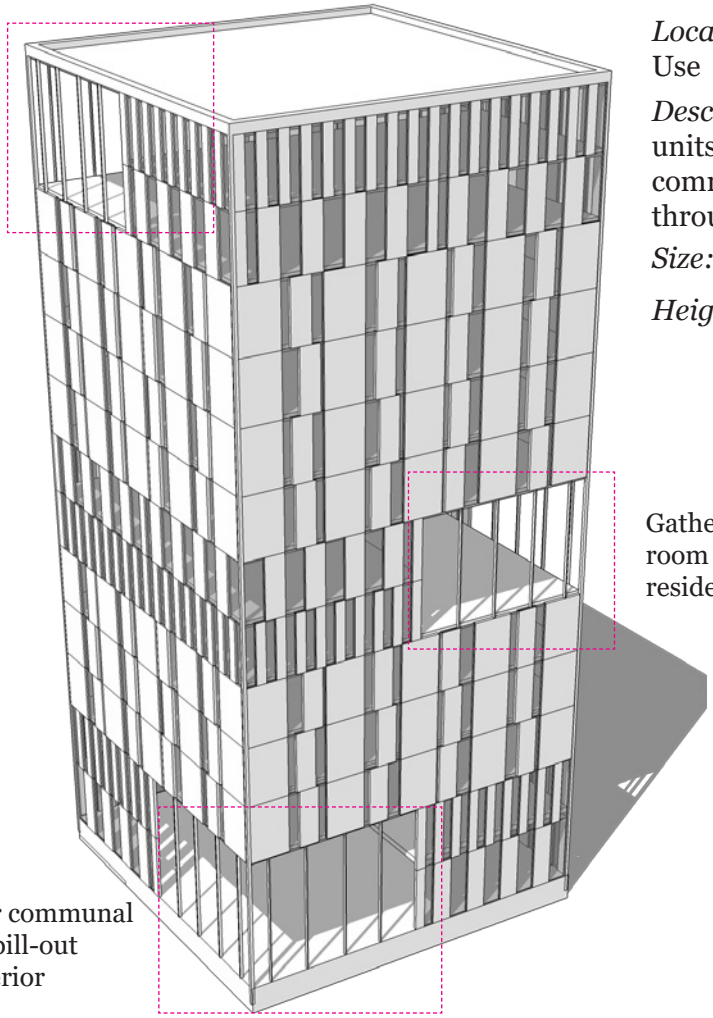
Location: Center of Mixed-Use

Description: Row housing for parents. Small front yard to retain privacy due to its location. Consists of 3 attached units.

Size: 2700 sq ft - 3 BR 2 BA
1600 sq ft - 2 BR 2 BA
1600 sq ft - 2 BR 2 BA

Height: 28 feet

Tower (figure 4.45)



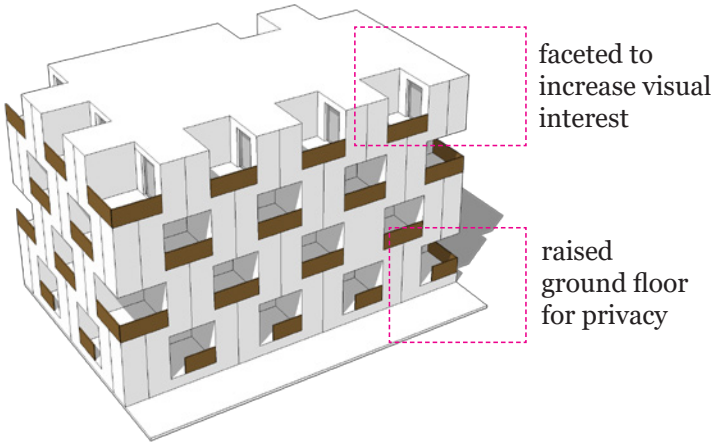
Location: Residential and Mixed-Use

Description: 40 high-end condo units. Residential tower with communal floors staggered throughout.

Size: 900 sq ft - 2 BR 1 BA

Height: 130 feet

Faceted Apartment (figure 4.46)



Location: In Mixed-Use zone along Green Spine.

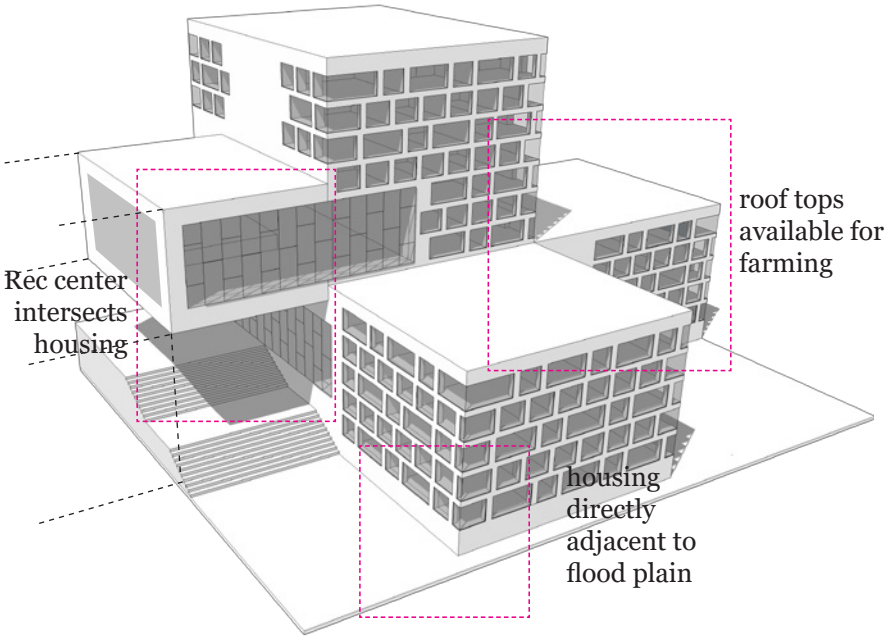
Description: Micro-unit rental apartment with ADA ground floor units and quick access to public green space. 24 units.

Size: 450 sq ft - studio flat

Height: 45 feet

Mixed-Use Building Types

Recreation Center Housing (figure 4.47)



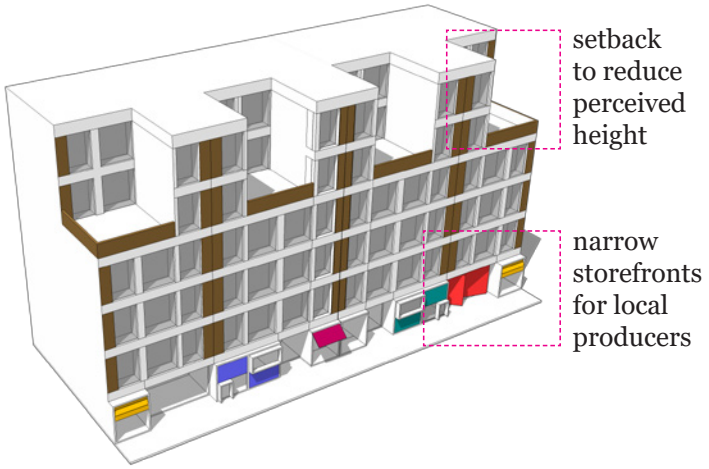
Location: Near Transit and Flood Plain.

Description: Community amenities do not have to be single use. In this case the residential was integrated in the upper floors and towards the more quiet flood plain. 32 units per block.

Size: 960 sq ft
2 BR 1 BA - Flat

Height: 65 - 140 feet

Variegated Apartment (figure 4.48)



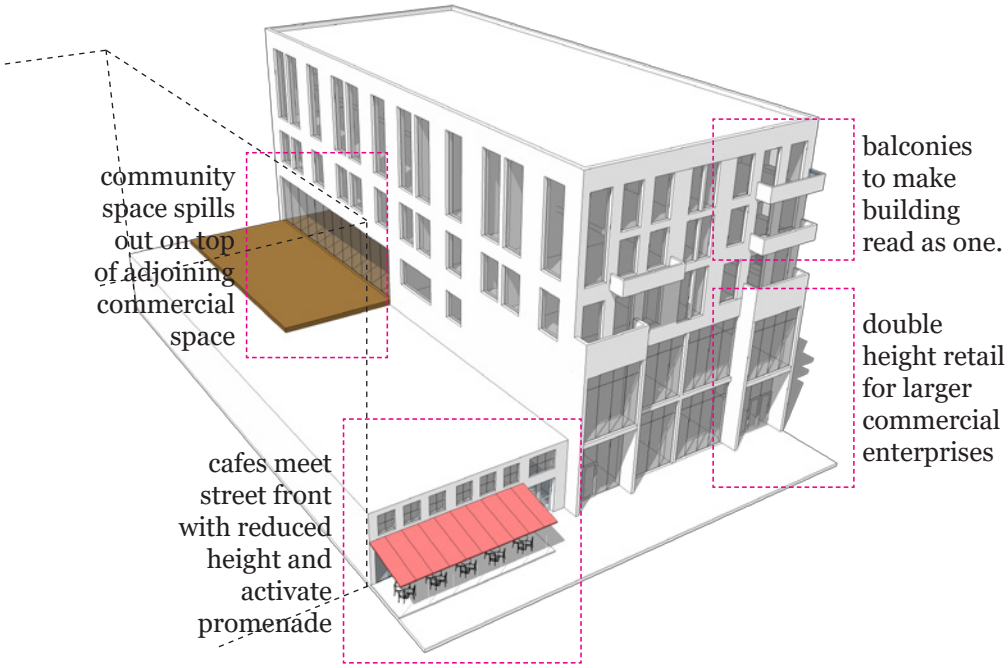
Location: In Mixed-Use zone along Green Spine.

Description: Rental apartment with small scale commercial space on ground floor subsidized by top floor penthouse. Rent-to-own.

Size: 900 sq ft - 2 BR 1 BA
1450 sq ft - 2 BR 2 BA

Height: 65 feet

Promenade Housing (figure 4.49)



Location: Along the Promenade.

Description: Mixed-Use. Residential lofts and flats, community room and various commercial spaces. Due to topography, residential is accessed behind the building creating a clear reading of public and private space. 30 Units per block

Size: 650 sq ft - Loft
645 sq ft - Flat

Height: 20 - 75 feet

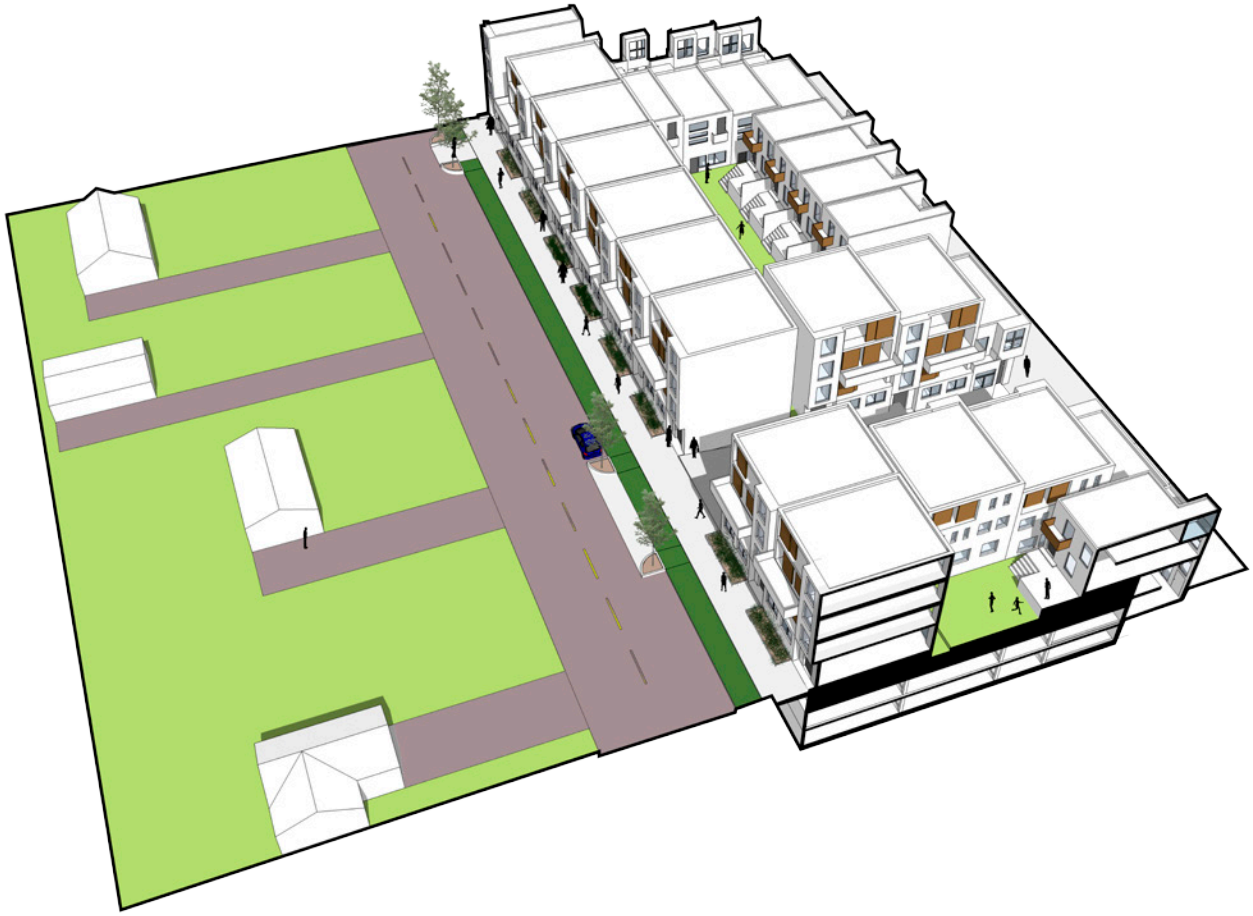


Figure 4.50 Suburbia meets Aurora Square

The Space Between Buildings

The following diagrams illustrate a range of possibilities that could occur around and between buildings. They range from human activities to ecological activities.

Suburbia meets Aurora Square

Figure 4.50 (located on figure 4.51) shows how the street is held along Dayton Ave. There are pedestrian entrances every 180 feet and vehicular entrances every 400 feet. This is to create a pedestrian porous street edge. The row housing at first might seem like a barrier to its suburban neighbors but is meant to coax pedestrians to more vibrant places within the site. For public spaces located in low-density housing would be under utilized and quickly turn into dubious areas. The associated perspective can be found in figure 4.52.

Figure 4.51 Location map for figure 4.50.

Figure 4.52 Perspective of Old World Entry.

Figure 4.53 Community Terraces

Figure 4.54 Location map for figure 4.53.

The courtyard typology is used to create private residential areas that still allow for density while funneling in plenty of light and air. This housing typology is also in tune with users who which to avoid living in a harsh urban environment but do not mind its density.

Community Terraces

Figure 4.53 (located on figure 4.54) illustrates some of the possibilities that could emerge from breaking open the courtyard typology and turning them into open community terraces. These spaces could be intimate playgrounds, provide gardening opportunities or any other number of activities the community would like to engage in. This act of opening and compressing space avoids the monotony that is otherwise created by an orthogonal street grid. Associated perspective can be found in figure 4.54.

Figure 4.55 Perspective of Community Terraces

Figure 4.56 Towers in the Park 2.0

Towers in the Park 2.0

Figure 4.56 (located on figure 4.57) shows how towers can be configured so they do not detract from public space. The traditional 'Tower in the Park' configuration failed because the space between the buildings turned into a 'no man's land.' However, if ownership can be created through public ground floor interaction, robust play areas, and reducing the amount of 'place-less' green space, the tower model could succeed in such an instance; especially if the adjacent inhabitants from the medium-high density

Figure 4.57 Location map for figure 4.55.

housing are attracted by its unique qualities and programmatic elements. Associated perspective can be found in figure 4.58.

Figure 4.58 Perspective of Activity Central

Figure 4.59 Along the Green Spine

Along the Green Spine

Figure 4.59 (located on figure 4.60) starts to reveal the natural processes that are occurring on the site. The green spine that runs along the north/south landscape corridor catches the stormwater from the western half of the site. Here, housing and educational facilities can take advantage of the recreational trails, wildlife habitat, and ecological infrastructure that is immediately adjacent to them. This convenience to nature would attract people to venture outdoors, becoming part of the public realm. This spine also facilities pedestrian connections to the rest of the site. Associated perspective can be found in figure 4.61.

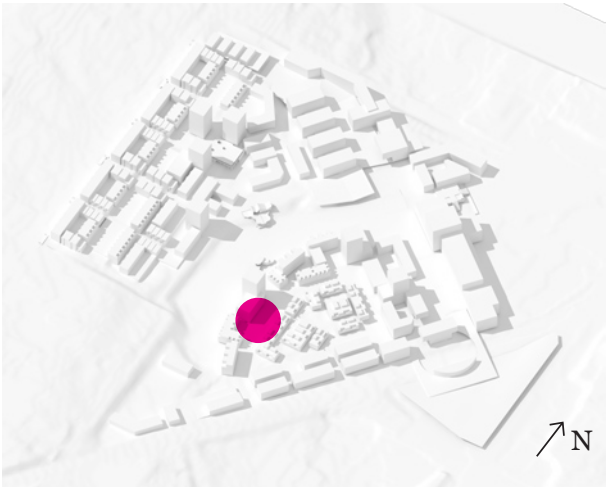


Figure 4.60 Location map for figure 4.58.

Figure 4.61 Perspective of the Green Spine

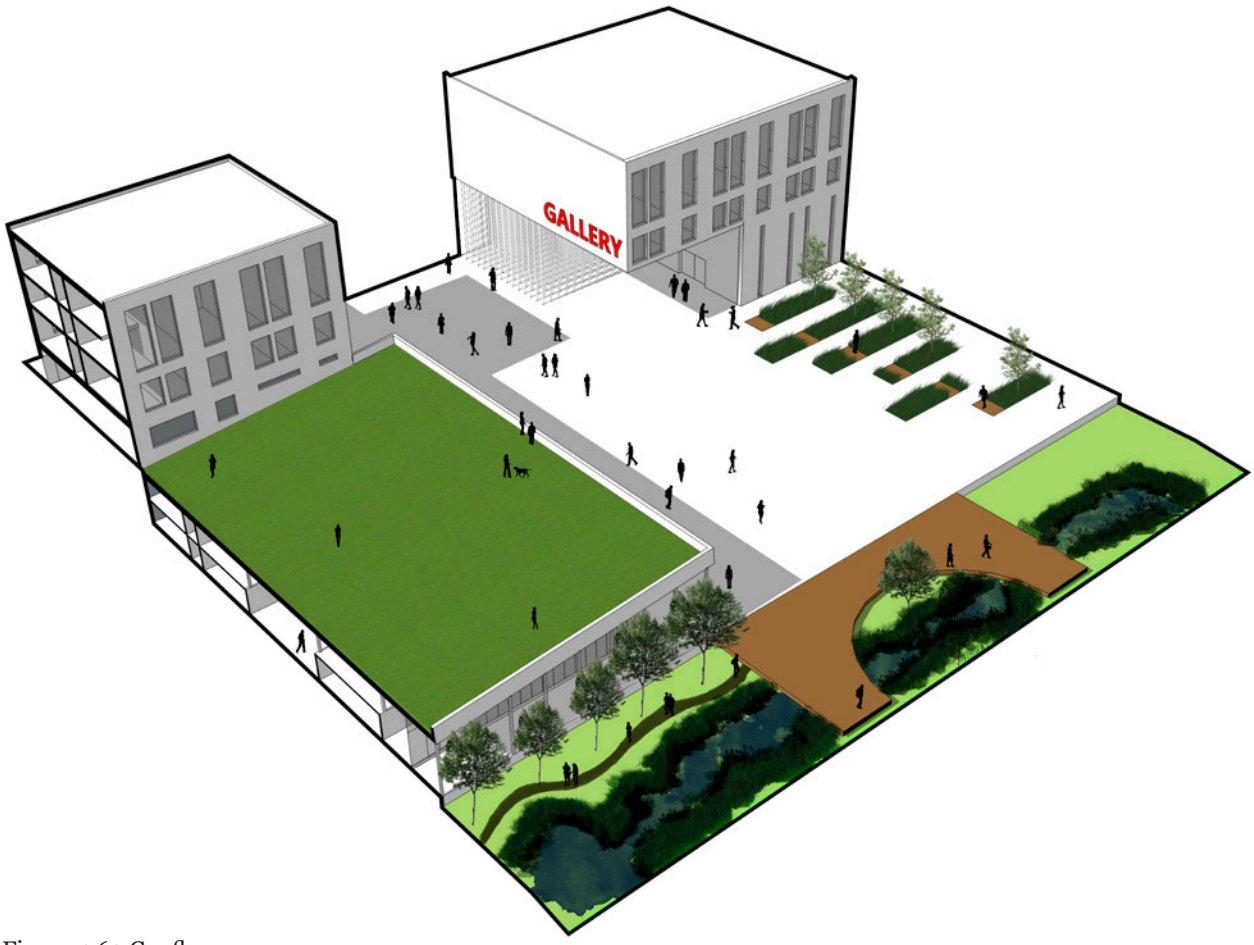


Figure 4.62 Confluence

Confluence

Figure 4.62 (located on figure 4.63) provides an image for where the two landscape corridors meet. Water from the promenade is now able to filter into the green spine and the green spine announces its presence as it emerges in the center of the promenade's hardscape. It is at this intersection, where hardscape meets softscape, that many of the community amenities are found and access to large democratic spaces is available. These spaces range in elevation and size, from the large vegetated roof of the library to the small intimate spaces of the local gallery. Not shown in the diagram (but shown on the plan) is a plaza that is large enough to host events such as protest, festivals, markets, and concerts. Associated perspective can be found in figure 4.64.

Figure 4.63 Location map for figure 4.61.

Figure 4.64 Perspective of the Confluence

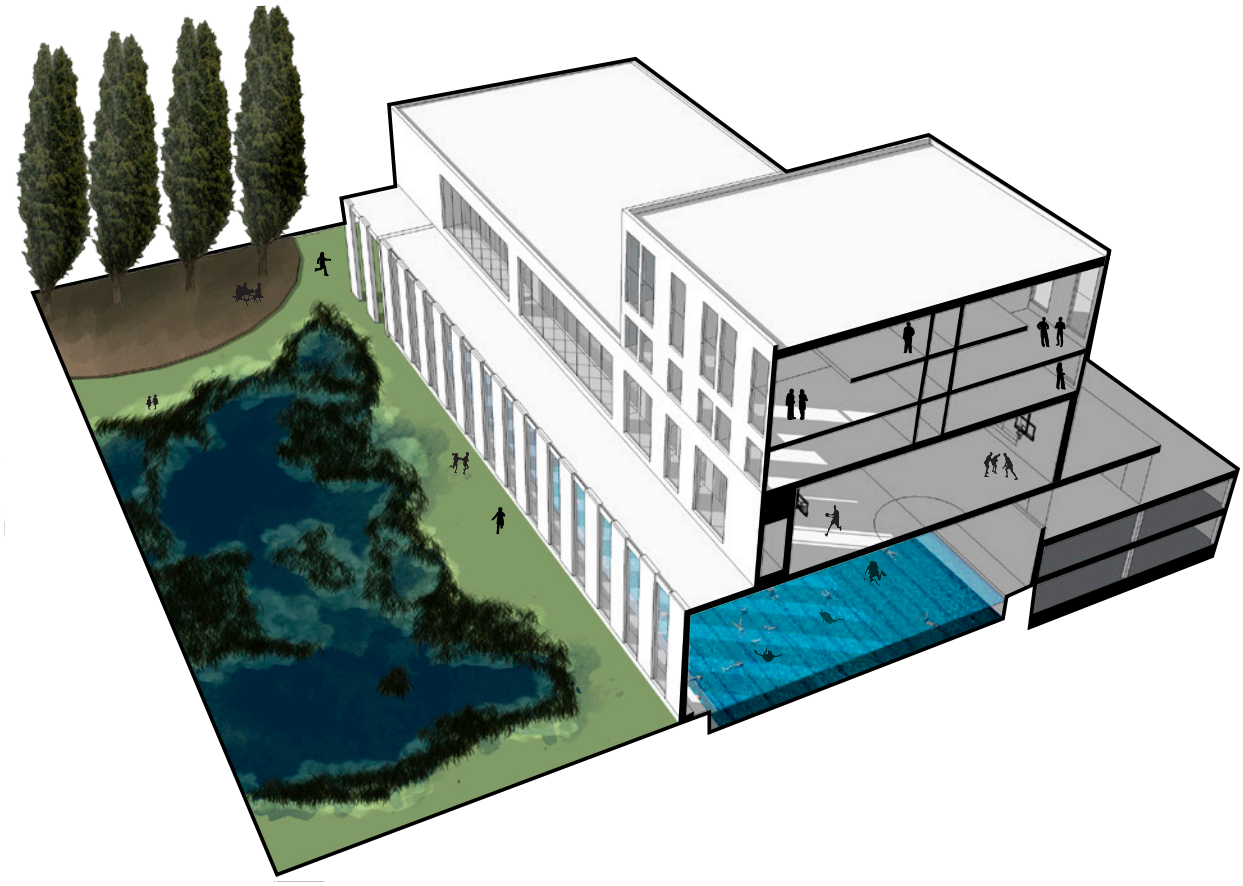


Figure 4.65 Rec Center Flood Plain

Flood Plain

Figure 4.65 (located on figure 4.66) the possibility of how a community building could showcase its environment and interact with it without explicitly doing so. The swimmers inside would be at-grade with the flood plain and the users would have a fantastic vantage point of the flood processes happening during a heavy deluge and notice the changing wildlife throughout the year. The flood plain would also announce the rec center, promoting an active, healthy lifestyle, to passersby. Associated perspective can be found in figure 4.67. This would transform Aurora Square from a relic of the 1960's automobile driven consumerism era into an ever evolving civic hub, able to benefit the lives of future generations.

Figure 4.66 Location map for figure 4.64.

Figure 4.67 Perspective of the Flood Plain

End Notes

1. "Shoreline History." City of Shoreline : Shoreline History. Accessed September 13, 2016. http://www.shorelinewa.gov/community/about-shoreline/shoreline-history.

2. Ibid.

3. Rowe, Peter G. Making a Middle Landscape. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (1991). Page 109.

4. Ibid. Page 110.

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6. Ibid. Page 121.

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8. Gruen, Victor. Centers for the Urban Environment. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company (1973). Page 11.

9. Rowe, Peter G. Making a Middle Landscape. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (1991). Page 141.

10. "Aurora Square Community Renewal Area." City of Shoreline : Aurora Square Community Renewal Area. Accessed September 17, 2016. http://www.cityofshoreline.com/business/aurora-square-community-renewal-area.

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Figure 4.1 Google Maps. *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.2 City of Shoreline. "Great Northern Railroad." Digital image. Shoreline History *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.3 City of Shoreline. "Highway 99." Digital image. Shoreline History *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.4 City of Shoreline. "Shoreline Zoning Map." Digital image. *http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/zoning.pdf*

Figure 4.5 Hatala, Greg. "1950s-era photo of the W.T. Grant store." Digital image. Vintage photos of shops and stores in N.J. *http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/11/vintage_photos_of_shops_and_stores_in_nj.html*

Figure 4.6 Keith. "Livonia, Michigan - circa 1970's." Digital image. Wonderland Mall. *http://mallsofamerica.blogspot.com/2006/06/wonderland-mall.html*

Figure 4.7 Villet, Grey. "Southdale Center : 1956." Digital image. Getty Images. *http://http://www.gettyimages.com/license/50335646*

Figure 4.8 Google Maps. *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.9 Google Maps. *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.10 Malek, Jack. "Sears was cutting edge when it was built." Digital image. Community Renewal Area - Aurora Square. *http://www.shorelineareanews.com/2012/08/community-renewal-area-aurora-square.html*

Figure 4.11 Google Maps. *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.12 Google Maps. *https://www.google.com/maps*

Figure 4.13 City of Shoreline. "Plan for Aurora Square (FEIS)." Digital image. Aurora Square Community Renewal Area. *http://www.cityofshoreline.com/business/aurora-square-community-renewal-area*

Figures 4.11-4.66 Self Credit

Conclusion

Reflections

The motivation behind the first suburbs - the desire for nature, clean air, and peace - has not gone out of fashion. Sadly, these qualities are often far too rare in the contemporary suburban landscape. Small private gardens and slivers of green setbacks have deformed nature and the public realm where we now need to travel considerable distances to experience any sort of robust biodiversity or pleasant urban environments. While suburbs are here to stay, they will not adhere to the preconceived notions of what they were several decades ago. They are densifying at a rapid rate due to their affordability and proximity to urban centers. Current suburban planning strategies are addressing this increasing population by simply relying on denser zoning along major thoroughfares. While this situates large groups of people along major transit arteries, in hopes of reducing additional car commuters, little else is considered for their welfare. The suburban malaise, its placelessness, poor social capital, lack of public infrastructure, and car dependency remain and is only being forced upon a large vulnerable population. Instead, of enforcing ubiquitous density the opportunities it offers need to be realized. By aggregating buildings in tight clusters and transferring the otherwise wasteful setbacks into meaningful sense of space can created. However, generic open space is not always indicative of a vitalic public realm. By addressing contemporary social and environmental issues spaces can be designed to provide a myriad of functions and buildings can engender a stronger sense of shared ownership. Multifunctionality is also a beneficial attribute in locations that have limited space and size constraints. By providing multiple services, open space can be deemed a necessary component of dense environments. While some might argue that design the of public space is irreverent it has been well documented that proves otherwise. For instance, Jan Gehl has authored several books, such as Cities for People (2010) and Life Between Buildings (2006), that focus on this subject. Gehl delivers a compelling argument that a well designed urban realm is revealed by the behavior of people, not particularly by the fast moving pedestrian, but those who linger. However, due to this project's short time frame, I was unable to really begin focusing on the design for an intimate pedestrian-scale that is needed for the landscape corridors. Despite this, the argument of this thesis remains. We need to change our design strategies to accommodate the on-going change taking place in our suburbs.

By taking a comprehensive look various urban design strategies, and the motivations behind them, we can weigh their strengths and shortcomings, synthesizing them into a stronger and more resilient whole.

Future Applications

This thesis had two conflicting ulterior motives. One was to create a utopian vision, and the other was to design a project that could be actually realized. Much of design education focuses solely on the design process and places very little emphasis on feasibility and economics. Because much of the built environment is decided by numbers and spreadsheets, including this bit of realism made for a valuable approach (at least on a personal level). A designer needs the ability to see both the potentials and the realities a project, and site offers.

A site like Aurora square would need a density of roughly 175 people per acre (the average density of Beijing) to be economically self-sufficient. While this might tilt the project towards the more myopic utopian category, it actually reinforces its feasibility and pertinence. And, while this project focused upon a specific site, its framework is setup so it can be imagined in any underperforming suburban +40 acre site. This could ultimately create a network of hubs, proliferated throughout suburbia, acting like a neural network supporting a robust social and ecological capital.

After all, design is not a magic bullet. It is a part of the complex web of economics, policy, social attitudes, health, environmental and infrastructure. However, what design is capable of, is physically embodying the manifesting these forces, allowing us to confront, experience, be present in and share the rich nature of our contemporary world. While this project will live on paper, may it serve as an inspiration for how, if the proper forces align, potent design can in catalyze social equity and environmental sustainability?

As suburban poverty continues to expand, it is vital to understand how the lack of social and physical infrastructure can negatively impact its poorer citizens and how social isolation and neglect leads to towards intergenerational poverty. This must be addressed at all costs because entrenched and widespread poverty will ultimately not just reflect upon a neighborhood, but the city and its people as a whole. It is, therefore, essential to provide a policy framework that is able to accommodate a wide variety of self-deterministic outcomes, allow for access to fundamental social resources and maintain housing affordability. By allowing housing supply to meet demand (by building vertically, not horizontally), it is possible to reduce property prices, maintain affordability and allow entrance into the middle-class. The many acres of derelict malls and big box stores in suburbia are prime locations for housing and community amenities. Not only do they come on large parcels of land, but they also are pervasive in nature allowing them to act as walkable, multi-centered hubs, accessible to large segments of suburban residents by

public transit. By attracting the poor and wealthy alike, capital can exchange hands and allow local products to be sold and local businesses to be supported. By doing this, and by providing a democratically well-considered and well-designed built environment, not only can address social inequity, but instill a sense of altruism and sense of togetherness within residents of a city, thereby circumventing the neoliberal mindset which has not only led to suburban sprawl, but also is currently inhibiting efforts in solving global issues.

Appendix

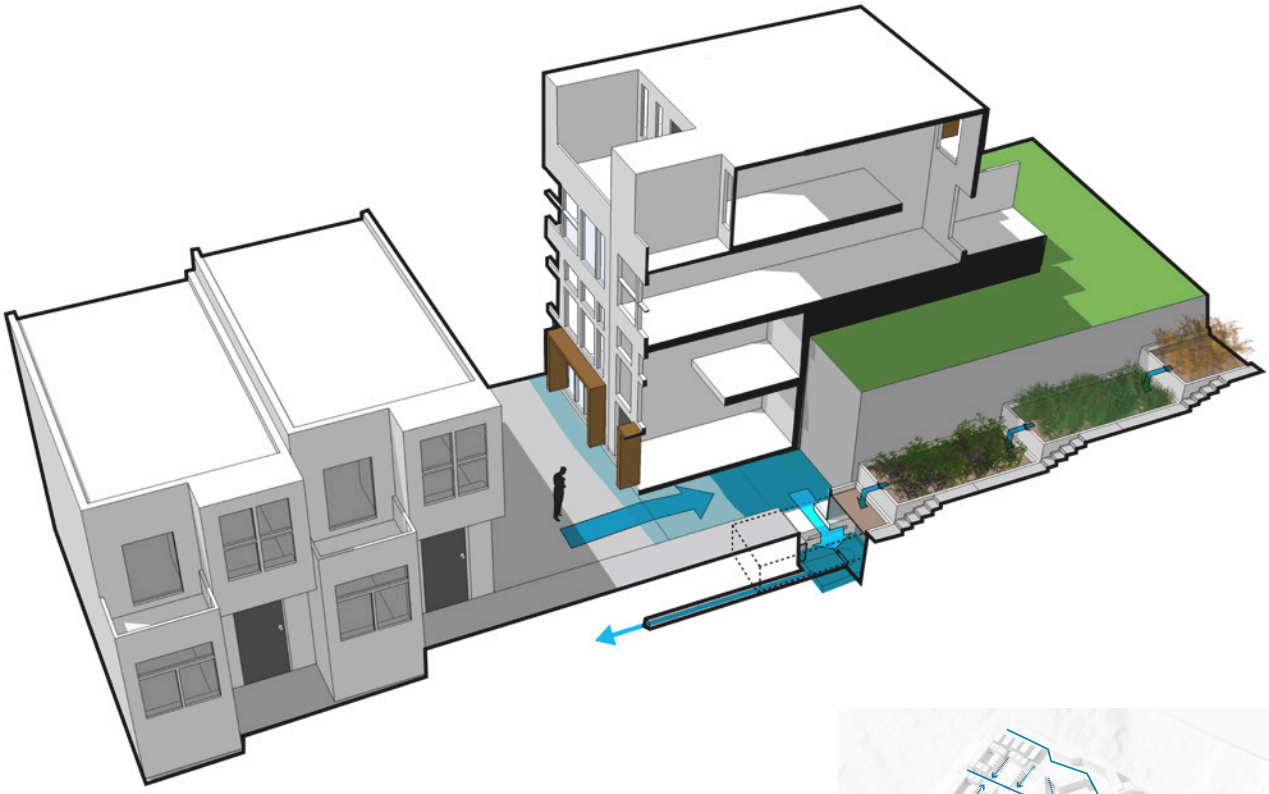

Figure A.1 Stormwater: collection in residential areas

Figure A.2 Hydrological Location Map

Figure A.3 Stormwater: Green Spine

Figure A.4 Hydrological Location Map

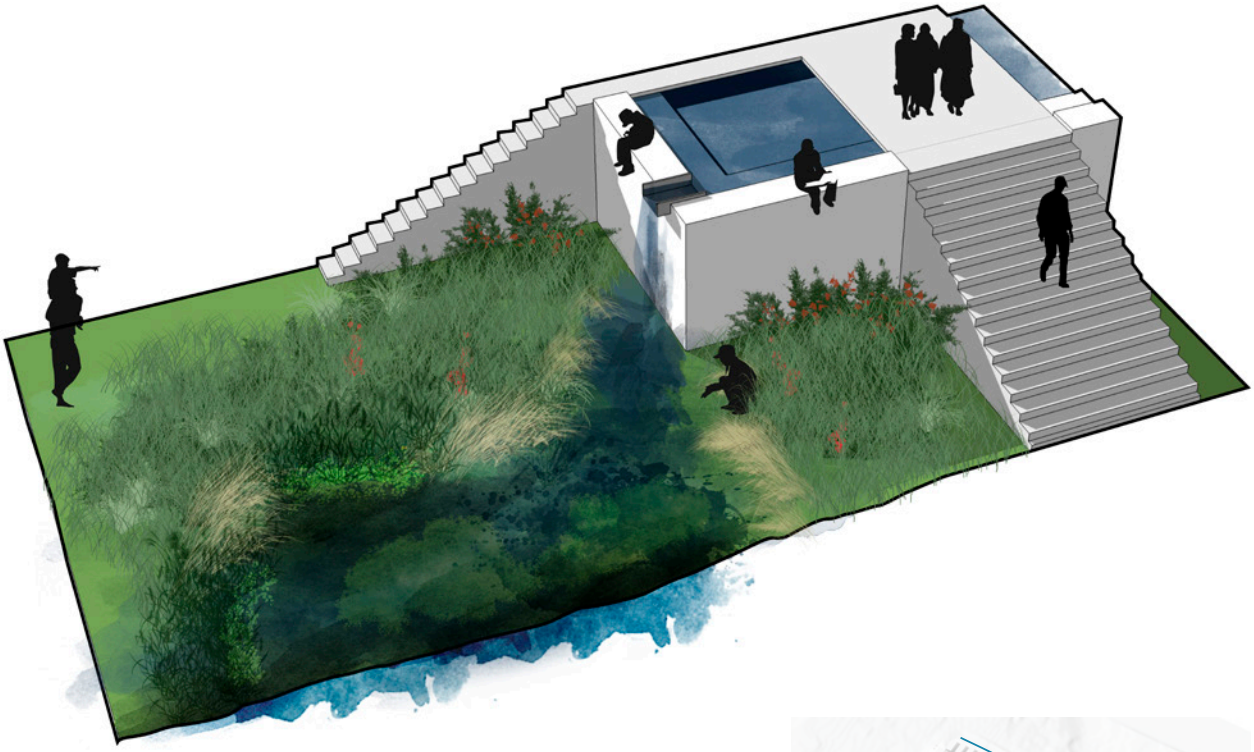

Figure A.5 Stormwater: Flowing from plaza to Flood Plain

Figure A.6 Hydrological Location Map

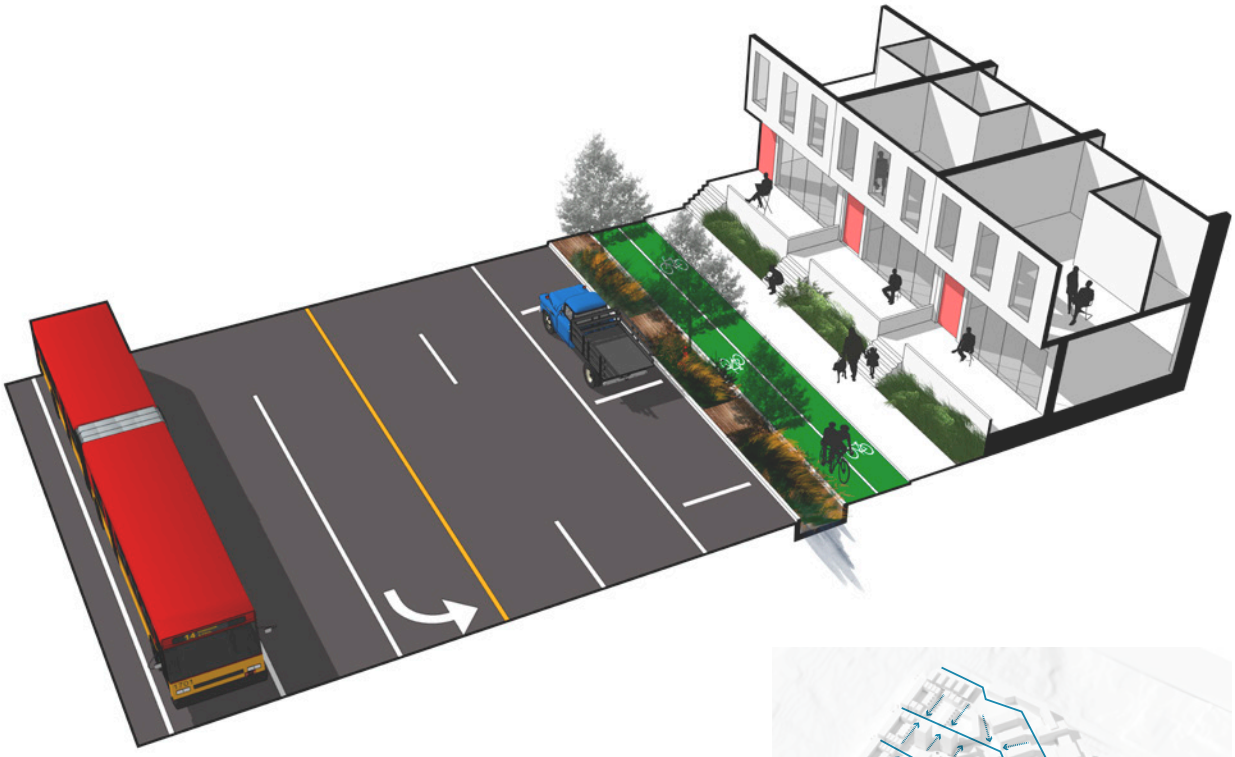

Figure A.7 Stormwater: Swales capture water before it can flow onto Westminster Way N.

Figure A.8 Hydrological Location Map

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